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REVOLUTIONS

IN

ENGLISH HISTORY.

29921

BY

ROBERT VAUGHAN, D.D.

VOL. I.

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ESSAYS AND REMAINS

OF THE REV.

ROBERT ALFRED VAUGHAN, B.A.,

AUTHOR OF 'HOURS WITH THE MYSTICS.'

EDITED, WITH A MEMOIR,

By ROBERT VAUGHAN, D.D.

Two Vols., with Portrait, 14*s*.

PREFACE.

IN this work the reader will not find everything he would expect to find in a publication bearing the title of a History of England. But it is intended that these pages shall include so much of the past as will suffice to give full presentation and prominence to the great changes in the history of this country, showing whence they have come, what they have been, and whither they have tended. My narrative, accordingly, while not described as a History of England, is designed to serve the purpose for which all such histories have been professedly written. English history embraces much in common with the history of Europe, together with much that has been characteristic of itself; and it is reasonable that Englishmen should be more interested in what has been special to their country, than in details which might have had their place in the history of any one among a large family of states. The question to which this work is designed to present an answer is—What is it that has made England to be England? My object is to conduct the reader to satisfactory conclusions in relation to this question, by a road much more direct and simple than is compatible with the laws to which

the historian usually conforms himself when writing the general history of a nation. Our busy age needs some assistance of this nature.

But while the spirit of our times is sufficiently disposed to appreciate directness and compression in authorship, it is, I am aware, by no means disposed to accept superficiality in the place of thoroughness. I do not affect to be unacquainted with what modern writers have published on English history; but it is only due to myself to state, that on no point of importance in relation to my object, have I allowed myself to be dependent on such authorities. In many instances, when I have contented myself with citing a modern author, it has not been until after an examination of the sources adduced in support of his statements. It has been my earnest wish that this work should be the result throughout of a fair measure of independent research and of independent thought.

The sense in which I use the term 'Revolution' scarcely needs explanation. The word is meant to comprehend the great phases of change in our history, due place being assigned to the great cause in regard to each of them. Down to the close of the fourteenth century, change among us comes mainly from the conflicts of race. Under the Tudors, the great principle of revolution is religion; under the Stuarts, that principle gives place considerably to the principles of government. The first question to be settled was the question of race; the next concerned the national faith; and the next, the future of the English Con-

stitution. Many causes contributed to the strength of these leading causes of action, but through their respective periods these are felt to be leading causes, and the effects which flow from them are all more or less impressed by them. In the progress of Great Britain since 1688, no single cause has acquired the prominence of the causes above mentioned.

In taking up such a theme as the Revolutions in English History, it is probable that no two writers would be agreed as to the best method of dealing with it—or as to the principle that should determine the selection of material, and where to stop. On these points, and on many beside, I have to throw myself on the candour of the reader. The course I have taken has been chosen after the best thought I could bestow on the subject. In the further prosecution of my object, I hope to avail myself freely of the rich material in the State Paper Office, still in manuscript, and which, thanks to the present Master of the Rolls, is becoming more accessible every day for the purposes of history.

Heath Lodge, Uxbridge,
1859.

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BOOK I.

CELTS AND ROMANS.

CHAPTER I.

THE EARLY INHABITANTS OF BRITAIN.

THE man who treads the greensward of Dover Cliff for the first time, will feel that before him is the passage which must have been made by some of the earliest settlers in Britain. The white coast of Gaul stretches along in the distance, and the track of voyagers in the unknown past seems to be still upon those waters. On those waters, too, the dark sides and the floating sails of the multitude of ships under the command of Cæsar seem to be still visible. But in the age of Cæsar many centuries must have passed since the first rude wicker-boat grazed its oxhide covering on our shore and landed the first man. Some hundreds of winters must then have come and gone since the first attempt was made to penetrate our primeval forests, or to compass our stagnant marshes. Far back, even then, must the day have been when the eye of man — that probably half-naked and wondering new-comer—fell for the first time on the waters of the Thames and the Humber, the Severn and the Mersey. But man comes in his season: and now the day will come when the borders of the Thames shall be no longer a wilderness, and when from the banks of the Mersey other sounds shall be heard than those of untamed animals in search of prey.

But how soon change by the hand of man began to make its appearance in Britain is a point on which we cannot speak with exactness. Rude nations do not write histories, and it is not until they begin to cast off their rudeness that civilized nations begin to write history for them. We know, however, that the merchants of Phœnicia were the people to open the first communication between this island and distant countries. It is the commercial spirit that gives to Britain her place for the first time in history. So we were called from our obscurity by the kind of enterprise which was to be the source of our ultimate greatness.

Phœnicia.

The strip of the coast of Syria known to the ancients as Phœnicia, did not measure much more than a hundred miles in length, and scarcely twenty in breadth. Along the inland border of Phœnicia rose the snow-covered mountains of Lebanon, with their slopes and ravines darkened here and there by their ancient cedars. From those highlands roots were sent off as rocky promontories into the sea. The coast was thus broken up into a succession of bays, which became harbours, and fitting places for fortresses and walled cities. The Phœnicians knew well how to use such advantages. As the mariner spread his sail in front of the city of Aradus, and with a favouring breeze from the land, turned the high prow of his vessel towards Egypt, every few miles placed him abreast with a new city. Tripolis, Berytus, Sidon, Tyre—all rose thus in succession from the sea. The land between those cities was studded with cities of less importance, and with villages. Everywhere the signs of industry were visible, in the culture of the field, of the vine, and of the olive. The relation of this chain of cities to the countries eastward of them, and westward, was for many centuries the same with that of the great cities of Italy in the Middle Ages. Phœnicia and Italy had their place at about the middle of the civilized world; and both were

the means, in their time, of enabling the one half of the human family to interchange commodities with the other half.

Phœnician history.

The greatness of the Phœnician power dates from a thousand years before the age of Augustus. Its prosperity continued unabated during the first half of that interval. Its ships visited every shore of the known world, and often penetrated into the unknown. In those remote times, Phœnician navigators made their way to Cape Finistere, and learnt to strike across the open sea to Britain. In such adventures the Cynosure, the last light in the Little Bear, was their chosen polestar. The Cynosure beams upon us as brightly as ever, but the Phœnician mariner is gone. Great military monarchies are bad neighbours to small commercial states. It is in the nature, also, of such states, that they should rely too much on the aid of mercenaries—a dangerous weapon. The tendency of their wealth, too, is ever towards concentration and oligarchy. In time, the few who govern become divided by feuds between their rival houses, and the many who are governed become lost to patriotism. So weakness within is all that remains to be opposed to strength from without. From these causes the soldier power prevailed at length in the history of Phœnicia over the merchant power. The glory of the past became wholly of the past. In modern Tyre the fisherman dries his nets on the ruins of ancient palaces.*

* Xenophon's description of a Phœnician vessel shows that the Phœnicians greatly excelled the Greeks as seamen. 'The best and most accurate arrangement of things I ever saw, was when I went to look at the great Phœnician ship. For I saw the greatest quantity of tackling separately disposed in the smallest stowage. You know that a ship comes to anchor or gets under way by means of many wooden instruments and many ropes, and sails by means of many sails, and is armed with many machines against hostile vessels, and carries about with it many cooks for the crew, and all the apparatus which men use in a dwelling-house for each mess. Beside all this, the vessel is filled with cargo, which the owner carries for his own profit. And all that I have mentioned lay in not much greater space than will be found in a chamber large enough

BOOK I. CHAP. I.

Greek testimony.

But if Phœnicia was the first to discover the island of Britain, it is to Greece we owe the first literary notices concerning it. When Paul preached to the men of Athens on Mars Hill, four centuries and a half had passed since Herodotus had read his *History* to the ancestors of the same people. That number of years in our own history would take us back to the days of Henry V. and the battle of Agincourt. Time does not become less by distance; but, like all other objects, it seems to do so. In the age of Herodotus the kings of Rome had all passed away, and the patricians and plebs were committed to their great struggle. But the historian, while he makes no mention of Rome, deems it proper to state that, if he has not spoken concerning 'the islands called Cassiterides, whence tin 'is imported,' it is because he had 'no certain know-'ledge of them,'—a manner of expression which implies that the things rumoured at that time concerning the islands so named must have led his auditory to expect information on that subject. That tin and amber are brought, says the historian, from the extreme parts of Europe is unquestionable.* The word Cassiterides would have conveyed no meaning to a Briton or a Gaul. The word *cassiteros* for tin, is first found in Homer, but it does not appear to have been of Greek origin. There is no room to doubt, that in the Scilly Islands, we have the remains of the Cassiterides of Herodotus.

Aristotle flourished a century later than Herodotus. In a passage which has been attributed to that philosopher, it is said that beyond the Celtæ (Gaul) there are 'two very large islands called Britannic, Albion, and Ierne;' and that near to Britain there are not a few small islands. Aristotle might readily have learnt

conveniently to hold ten beds. All this too lay in such a way that they did not obstruct one another, so that they needed no one to seek them, and there were no knots to untie and cause delay, if they were suddenly wanted for use.'—*Œconomicus.* Kenrick's *Phœnicia*, c. vii.

* *Hist.* lib. iii. § 115.

thus much from the Phœnician seamen of his time; but both the date and the authorship of the work in which this passage is found are doubtful.*

Voyage of Himilco.

It was while Aristotle was teaching at Athens, that is, in 360 B.C., that the Carthaginians sent their great captain Himilco into these regions on a voyage of discovery. This navigator explored the seas and coasts of Britain, and some fragments from the report made by him have reached us. These fragments are found in the ancient poem of Festus Avienus. Himilco is there made to speak of this island, and especially of the point where the sea separates the Land's End in Cornwall from the islands beyond, in the following terms: 'Here rises the head of the promontory, in 'olden times named Œstrymnon, and below, the like-'named bay and isles; wide they stretch, and are rich 'in metals, tin and lead. Here a numerous race of 'men dwell, endowed with spirit, and with no slight 'industry, busied all in the cares of trade alone. They 'navigate the sea in their barks, built, not of pines or 'oak, but, strange to say, made of skins and leather. 'Two days long is the voyage thence to the Holy Island '(once so called), which lies expanded in the sea, the 'dwelling of the Hibernian race; at hand lies the 'isle of Albion.'†

In this passage, notwithstanding some obscure expressions, there is a clear reference to the Scilly Islands, to Mount's Bay, and Mount St. Michael. In our maps, the Scilly Islands consist of small dots sprinkled at various distances on the sea. Albion, which is still near to those islands, was then no doubt much nearer, and the distance to Hibernia is not more than eighty miles. The mines of that district continue to yield large supplies of tin. It is not found anywhere in Britain except in that neighbourhood, and in a few places in the adjoining county of Devon. Spain, also, is said to have yielded some supplies of this metal;

* *De Mundo*, § 3. † Heeren's *Ancient Nations*.

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but in the Scilly Islands we see the Cassiterides (the tin islands) of Herodotus.

Polybius.

With the testimony of the Carthaginian admiral we must connect that of a Greek general. Between Himilco and Polybius there is the lapse of two centuries. Himilco, however, is our better guide. But we learn from Polybius that many had 'discoursed very largely' in his time about the gold and silver mines of Spain, and about 'the Britannic Isles and the working of 'tin;' and he accounts it necessary to offer a sort of apology for not doing something of the same sort himself. His language shows very clearly that a century before the Roman invasion, and among those who spoke the Greek language, enough was known concerning Britain to make intelligent men desirous of knowing more.* We owe something, accordingly, to Polybius, a man who added much of the virtue and wisdom of a sage, to the skill and courage of a soldier; but we owe more to that ancient mariner who was the first to survey our coast, to sound our shores, and to become familiar with those British seas in which so many brave men were to do brave deeds in the time to come.

Diodorus and Strabo.

But among our Greek authorities in relation to ancient Britain, we have to mention the historian Diodorus Siculus, and Strabo the geographer. Both these authors were contemporary with Cæsar and Augustus, both were men whose lives were given to the production of the works which bore their names, and their fragments concerning Britain are much more certain and satisfactory than will be found in preceding writers. The Britain they describe is not so much the Britain of Kent, which Cæsar had recently made known to them, as the Britain of Cornwall, as previously known to Phœnicians, Carthaginians, and Greeks. Diodorus regards Britain as an island, and has attempted a description of its extent and form.

* *Hist.* lib. iii. c. 57.

The Britons, he writes, 'who dwell near that promontory of Britain which is called Belerium (the 'Land's End), are singularly fond of strangers; and, 'from their intercourse with foreign merchants, are 'civilized in their manners. These people obtain tin 'by skilfully working the soil which produces it. The 'soil being rocky, has hard crevices from which they 'work out the ore, which they fuse and reduce to a 'metal. When they have formed it into cubical shapes, 'they convey it to a certain island lying off Britain, 'named Ictis; for at the low tides, the intervening 'space being dry land, they carry it thither in great 'abundance in waggons.' At low tides, says the historian, the places which seemed to be islands become peninsulas. 'Here the merchants purchase the tin 'from the natives, and carry it across into Gaul; whence 'it is conveyed on horses, through the intervening 'Celtic land, to the people of Massalia, and to the city 'called Narbonne.'* It will be seen that this account of the Cornwall Britons agrees substantially with that given by Himilco three centuries earlier.

Strabo writes: 'The Cassiterides are ten in number, 'and lie near each other in the ocean towards the north 'from the haven of Artabri. One of them is a desert, 'but the others are inhabited by men in black cloaks, 'clad in tunics reaching to the feet, and girt about the 'breast. Walking with staves, and bearded like goats, 'they subsist by their cattle, leading for the most part 'a wandering life. And having metals of tin and lead, 'these and skins they barter with the merchants for 'earthenware, and salt, and brazen vessels. Formerly 'the Phœnicians alone carried on this traffic, by Gadeira '(Gibraltar), concealing the passage from every one: 'and when the Romans followed a certain shipmaster, 'that they might also find the mart, the shipmaster, 'out of jealousy, purposely ran his vessel upon a shoal, 'and leading on those who followed him into the same

* Lib. v. c. 21, 22, 38.

'destruction, he himself escaped by means of a frag-
'ment of the ship, and recovered from the state the
'value of the cargo he had lost.'* Strabo adds, that subsequently the Romans discovered this passage to Britain, and availed themselves of it, though much more circuitous than the journey by land. Two writers among the Greeks of Alexandria are cited by Diodorus and Strabo as authorities for what they relate concerning Britain, viz. Eratosthenes and Artemidorus—and these authors, no doubt, derived their information from their neighbours the Phœnicians.

Britain as described by the Romans.

But it is to Roman authorship, beginning with Cæsar, that we are indebted for our earliest knowledge of Britain beyond the islands and the coast of Cornwall. From these authorities taken together, we learn that half a century before the Christian era, Britain was more or less peopled over its whole surface. The Celts of Gaul are described by those writers as divided into a multitude of nations. Tacitus reckons them as sixty-four.† Appian raises the number to four hundred.‡ Judging from the number of clans which have divided the Highlands of Scotland between them down to very recent times, it is easy to suppose that the nations, and still more the tribes, in Celtic Gaul were very numerous. We know that this distinction between nation and tribe obtained in Britain. The people of Kent in the time of Cæsar bore the common name of Cantii, but that general designation comprehended at least four tribes, each governed by its own prince or chieftain.§

Of the nations in possession of the British territory south of the Clyde and Forth eighteen centuries since, history makes distinct mention of twenty-five. Concerning the number of tribes included in these nations

* Lib. iii. c. 5. Some suppose the men seen in 'black cloaks,' and wearing long beards, to have been the Druids, not the population generally. But the official costume of the Druids was white, not black.

† *Ann.* iii. 44. ‡ *De Bel. Civil.* ii. 71.

§ *De Bel. Gal.* iii. 1. Cæsar has given the names of the chiefs.

Ancient British states.

our information is imperfect. Some of them, as will be supposed, were much more populous than others, and covered a larger territory. It is clear also, that even among those rude communities something like a balance-of-power theory was in operation. The weak found comparative safety in being allied with the strong, and in becoming parties to the rivalries between the more powerful. There were great powers and less in the Britain of those days, as there have been great powers and less in Europe in later times. The Silures, for example, the subjects of the well-known Caractacus, who are said to have had their origin and centre in the neighbourhood of the Wye, included the Ordovices and the Dimetæ of North Wales among their allies, and could call their warriors together from the whole length of territory between the Usk on the borders of Glamorganshire in the south, and the Dee of Cheshire in the north, and from over the breadth of country between the Malvern Hills and the Wrekin in the east, and St. George's Channel in the west. The Brigantes were a still more powerful people. Their lands measured the breadth of the island, from the seaboard of Yorkshire on the one side to that of Lancashire on the other. It, in fact, embraced all the northern counties of modern England. The Cantii, as before stated, were in possession of Kent. The Belgæ peopled Hampshire and Wiltshire. The greater part of Middlesex, including London, was in the hands of the Trinobantes. The Damnonii are found almost everywhere south of the river Ex. Along the east coast, between the Thames in the south, and the land of the Brigantes in the north, were the Iceni and the Coitanni. The spaces between these greater nations were occupied by many smaller, and the greater nations had become such by gradually absorbing many of less magnitude.*

* Ptolem. viii. 2. Antonin. *Itinerary.* Baxter's *Gloss. Brit.* Horsley's *Britannia Romana*—passim. Tacitus says the subdivisions of the

Race of ancient Britain.

The question now comes—Of what race were these communities? The answer of Cæsar is, that those of Kent and its neighbourhood were an immigrant race from Belgic Gaul. This he learnt from the Belgians themselves; and their representations were confirmed by what he saw on his first and second invasions. One of his pretences for these invasions was, the assistance the Britons had rendered to their brethren and allies in Gaul, when the latter were in arms against the Romans.* It is clear from subsequent authorities, that the people of the whole island were so far one in condition, customs, and language, as to be evidently of the same race. If some exception should be made in the case of the Picts, who became formidable in the Lowlands of Scotland at a later period, and of the Gaels, who have been always confined to the Highlands of that country, we can only say that we do not regard the difference, even in these cases, as amounting to a difference of race.

If the general statement now made be correct, to know the race of the Belgic Gauls in the time of Cæsar, is to know the race of the British at that time. The common opinion is, that the Belgæ were a branch of the great Celtic family. Nine-tenths of our most competent authorities are of this judgment, and nine-tenths of the evidence on the case is with them. That the Germans and Celts bordered upon each other, and mixed in some degree together upon the territory now known as the Low Countries, may be admitted. But that circumstance is consistent with the fact that the language of all the known communities of Britain was found to be Celtic, and not German. The language of Wales is not the language of the Germans; the Gaelic speech is not the speech of that people. Next in importance to the evidence from identity in

British people, and the consequent jealousies, prevented their acting together, and were constantly favourable to the success of the Romans.—*Vita Agric.* xii.

* *De Bel. Gal.*

language, is the evidence from identity in religion. Druidism, so different from Odinism, was dominant in Britain, and not less so in Celtic Gaul. Cæsar, indeed, says that the inhabitants of the interior of Britain were born in the island, while those on the sea-coast were recent settlers. But he does not say to what extent this was the case. Nor does he say that the difference was a difference of race. Had he taken up such a rumour, or recorded such a conjecture, it could have weighed little against the evidence in our possession.

Picts and Scots.

The Picts—the supposed ancestors of the Lowland Scotch—do not make their appearance in history under that name before the close of the third century of the present era. The controversy in regard to the origin of this name and people has been great and very bitter. They have become Germans, Scandinavians, Gaels, Britons, or nondescripts, according to the bias of our historians and antiquaries. From the remains of their language, as well as from other circumstances, the most reasonable, and now the most general opinion is, that the Picts were from the common Celtic stock, and for the most part Britons. The natives who were not disposed to submit to the Roman sway, would naturally be drawn together along some comparatively safe border of the Roman territory, and would prove troublesome to those within it. Ptolemy makes these northern tribes to have been seventeen in number.*

The Gaelic clans of the Highlands were also Celtæ. But their language, and their geographical position, seem to shut us up to one of two conclusions—either that they must have come into that part of Britain from Ireland, or that they were the remains of an aboriginal race which had been forced into those

* Worsaae's *Primeval Antiquities of Denmark.* Wilson's *Prehistoric Annals of Scotland,* 470–473. Latham's *Ethnology of the British Islands,* c. iv.

mountain fastnesses, into the Isle of Man, and into Ireland itself, by the pressure of subsequent invaders. There are some difficulties in the way of the latter supposition, but evidence, upon the whole, seems to preponderate in its favour. The Gaelic tongue is not British. Its only affinity is with the Irish. The word *Aber*, in Welsh, as in old British, denotes the estuary of a river, or any outlet of waters. The word *Inver*, in Gaelic and Irish, has the same meaning. The word *Aber* is so used, as a prefix to names of places, along a line extending from South Wales to the North of Scotland, marking off a territory to the right of that line as pervaded by the British tongue and race. The word *Inver* is commonly used for the same purpose through the Highlands to the left of that line, bespeaking the prevalence there of a tongue and race which are rather Irish than British. Thus, while the British tongue sounds along from Aberystwith to Aberdeen, the Gaelic makes itself heard from Inverary to Inverness.*

Question of a pre-Celtic race.

That Britain was in some degree peopled by a pre-Celtic race is an opinion familiar to the learned. But the evidence on which it rests is too fragmentary and uncertain to be available for history. There may have been, as our Northern antiquaries teach, an age of stone implements, and an age of bronze, preceding that age of iron which had come in the time of Cæsar.† But the line between those ages cannot be well defined, and the two former must be reckoned pre-historic. The race of the stone period, who had so far degenerated from the civilization of those eastern lands whence their progenitors had long since migrated,

* Kemble's *Saxons in England*, ii. p. 5. In Scotland there are eleven names of places commencing with the one prefix, and twelve commencing with the other. In Wales there are seven names commencing with *aber*—not one with *inver*.—Latham's *Ethnology of the British Islands*, c. v.

† Worsaae's *Primeval Antiquities of Denmark*.

must have passed away long before the age of Cæsar, like the vegetation of their own forests, leaving scarcely a trace behind.

Physical features of the ancient Britons.

Concerning the physical features of the inhabitants of Britain at the commencement of the present era, ancient writers have said but little. The description of the trading and peaceful Britons of Cornwall, with their long beards, long tunics, and long walking-staves, is manifestly a description that must not be deemed applicable to the Britons beyond that district. The Britons seen by Cæsar, though living in a colder latitude than the people of Cornwall, were comparatively naked. They were clad in skins. They stained their bodies with woad, covering them with purple figures; a custom not necessarily barbarous, inasmuch as it has been common among British seamen within our own memory. Its design could hardly have been to give fierceness to their aspect; it was the effect rather of a rude love of ornament. They wore a moustache, but no beard. Their hair fell long upon their shoulders; and they were brave and skilful in war.

Strabo speaks of some Britons seen by him at Rome as being taller than the Gauls, but more slightly built; their hair, also, was less yellow; and there was a want of symmetry in their lower limbs. There were no men in Rome so tall by half a foot.* It is possible, however, that these men were seen in procession; and if so, they would be picked men, and not a fair sample of their race.

Tacitus says the Britons varied in their physical appearance. The Caledonians had ruddy hair and large limbs. The Silures were more of an olive complexion, and their hair mostly dark and curling—suggesting an Iberian origin, and something in common perhaps between the proud Castilian and the countrymen of Caractacus. The tribes inhabiting the present Lowlands of Scotland he describes as a fierce people;

* Lib. iv. c. 5, § 2.

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the Silures as powerful and brave; and the Britons generally as not incapable of submission if mildly treated, but as passionate and uncontrollable under oppression.

Herodian, describing the expedition of the Emperor Severus against the Caledonians, writes: 'They know 'not the use of clothing, but encircle their loins and 'necks with iron, deeming this an ornament and an 'evidence of opulence, in like manner as other barba- 'rians esteem gold. They puncture their bodies with 'pictured forms of every sort of animals; on which 'account they wear no clothing, lest they should hide 'the figures on their bodies. They are a most warlike 'and sanguinary race, carrying only a small shield and 'a spear, and a sword girded to their naked bodies.'* If we accept this account as trustworthy, it will be clear from the pages of Tacitus and Dion Cassius, that the Britons of the south even in the first century, were greatly in advance of the rudeness of the north three centuries later. Boadicea is described as a woman of queenly presence. When addressing her men of war, she wore a rich golden collar, and a parti-coloured floating vest, drawn close about her bosom, and over that a thick mantle fastened with a clasp. Her hair was of a yellow colour, and fell in profusion to her waist.

Such, in brief, were the early inhabitants of Britain. More will be said of the state in which the Romans found them as we proceed to mark the change introduced by the coming in of that new power. Some rough experiences then came on the rude communities of this island. For civilized men do not often estimate the suffering of the not civilized according to a law of humanity. It is deemed enough to estimate it according to a law of caste. The blood of the rude flows—their hearts are broken—but what of that? Is such blood human—do such hearts really feel?

* Lib. iii. c. 24.

CHAPTER II.

REVOLUTION BY THE SWORD.

Rome in the time of Cæsar.

WHEN Cæsar meditated the invasion of Britain, the great Roman Republic was not dead, but every new breath seemed to betoken the action of a malady that must soon prove fatal. Marius, Sulla, and Cataline had done their work, and their history had revealed the general corruption of their times. Faction had come into the place of patriotism. Selfishness had consumed public spirit. All that men like Cato and Cicero could do in the face of the enemies of the commonwealth, was to break the force of a fall which had become inevitable. Laws which had been just and wise so long as the citizens to be governed by them were virtuous and few, were made to subserve all evil purposes now that the citizens had become to the last degree unprincipled, and had grown to be almost innumerable. The province of government had been restricted to the narrowest limits, that good men might be secured against oppression. But the time had come in which bad men abused the liberty which good men had known how to use. Nowhere was it more needed than in Rome that the government should be strong; but nowhere was a government of that nature more impracticable on the basis of existing law. Rome had become a den of desperate gamesters, and the winnings which the chances of the game were to distribute consisted of the plunder to be obtained from the world-wide provinces which the armies of the republic had subdued. Time was, when men in Rome cared about guarding the public honour, and augmenting the public virtue; but the great care had

now come to be how to appropriate public functions, as means of access to the public wealth.

Cæsar's policy in the invasion of Britain.

No man knew better than Cæsar that when a republic has passed into such a state its days are numbered. It deserves to perish, and it will assuredly perish. It has lost the power of self-government, it needs a master, and it is the law of Providence in such cases that the master shall come. But who was to be this presiding spirit? Cæsar judged, and judged rightly, that he was himself more competent than any other man to seize that position, and to hold it. But it became him to move with caution. If he had no equal, he had competitors: these must be dealt with, and affairs must otherwise be ripened for the catastrophe. Cæsar must add to his power by adding to his celebrity; and he must weaken the government still more, by giving more strength to the factions which preyed upon it. It was this policy that had disposed him to extend the war in Gaul into Germany, and that suggested the importance of annexing Britain to the territories of the republic. Every such achievement was estimated according to its value as capital in the hands of skilful instruments in Rome. Cæsar, accordingly, was not only careful to *do* great things, but careful also to secure that due reports should be made of them in all useful connexions by men at his service. His successes in his late campaign had been emblazoned among all parties in the capital by such means. His invasion of Britain—a land known in Rome more from fable than from history—was an event which admitted still more of a colouring from the marvellous. For whether Britain was really an island, or part of another continent, was a question left to be determined by Agricola a century and a half later.*

* Tacit. *Vita Agric.*, § 10. 'First under Agricola, and now under Severus it has been clearly proved to be an island.'—Dion Cassius, lib. xxxix. § 51. Xiphilin. lib. lxvi. § 20.

Newsvending in Rome.

We scarcely know how to conceive of the newsvending of a great city in which there were no printing-presses and no newspapers. But where there is little reading we may be sure there will be much talking. In the absence of journalism men had their expedients for doing what is now done by that means. The baths of Rome were the clubs of those days, and the centres of every sort of association. Many of their departments were open to all comers, and were filled with idlers. Not only in such places, but with the crowds which followed some patrician to his home, or gathered at the corner of almost every street, in every saloon, in every supper-party, in every gathering of persons, from the highest to the lowest, the man with the latest news never failed of an eager welcome. As the plot thickened, the agents of Cæsar became more numerous: they spread themselves into all public and private relations: and the final blow to the expiring liberties of the commonwealth was struck by their hand. Such was the policy of Cæsar when he resolved on the enterprise which has associated his name with the early history of Britain.

Cæsar's preparations.

Cæsar had brought his campaign in Gaul to a close. He had taught the Germans to respect the authority of Rome; and, though the season was far advanced, he flattered himself that he might do something in Britain which would be favourable to the object of his ambition. From the country of the Morini, between Calais and Boulogne, he saw the white coast of the unexplored land—the great cape-land, as many supposed, of some new world. Merchants in constant intercourse with Britain were interrogated concerning the country and its inhabitants. But the traders were more disposed to befriend their customers than to further the projects of the military aspirant who pressed them with such questions. An officer was sent to explore the coast. But appearances were such that he did not venture to land. Meanwhile vessels were collected in great numbers from all parts. The

intention of the Roman general was no secret among the Gauls. Every sail, and every boat, that crossed the Channel gave new warning to the Britons. Conferences took place in regard to the course best to be taken. Cæsar relates that, as the result of these deliberations, a messenger was sent to him stating that the Britons were not indisposed to place themselves under Roman protection. But the representative authority of this messenger must have been very limited. The reception given to Cæsar when attempting to land on the British shore, was not the reception to have been expected from a people prepared to submit without a struggle to the yoke of an invader.

The embarkation and passage.

The haven of Wissen, a little to the south of Calais, is the point from which Cæsar is supposed to have embarked. The ships containing the infantry, besides galleys for the officers, were eighty in number. The cavalry had been left to embark at Boulogne, in vessels which had been detained at that place by unfavourable winds. The shipping at Wissen, with their two legions of infantry, put to sea about ten at night, and made their appearance on the British coast about the same hour the next morning. The islanders had been vigilant. They were not taken by surprise. The high lands about Dover, and the green slopes descending to the sea, were covered with armed multitudes, mostly on foot, but many in war-chariots. Everywhere there was movement, and shouts from a great sea of voices, which promised no friendly greeting to the strangers.

The landing.

To land on a steep shore in the face of such assailants is felt to be impossible. The ships, accordingly, are seen moving along the coast northward, in search of a more convenient inlet. After sailing some seven or eight miles, they come to a level and open space, near where the town of Deal now stands; and there the prows of the vessels are turned towards the beach, and landing is to be attempted. But the natives have moved upon the land side by side with the enemy

upon the sea, and are prepared to meet him as before. Horsemen and footmen are there in great numbers. They rush down to the edge of the waters. Many advance into the sea, challenging the veterans to descend from their ships. But the surf runs high, and the soldiers hesitate to commit themselves to such uncertain footing in the face of so bold an enemy. For some time fortune seems to be on the side of the Britons. The military resources at the command of the Romans appear to be exhausted. Something needed to be done to check the audacity of the barbarians, and to compel a portion of them at least to retire to a greater distance. For this purpose several of the lighter vessels are made to run upon the shore, and from their lofty prows, which serve the purpose of towers, archers and slingers do much execution upon the natives, thinning their numbers, and diminishing their ardour. Still the soldiers seem to distrust their ability to reach the land—and it is becoming doubtful whether the legions may not be compelled to leave the coast of Britain baffled, and virtually defeated. At this juncture a standard-bearer rushes into the water, and raising aloft the Roman eagle, calls on all who do not mean to see that symbol of the power of Rome pass into the hands of the enemy to follow him and protect it. Many soldiers now leap without orders from the ships, and forming themselves into ranks as they best can, they press quickly and steadily, with shield and sword, upon the Britons. The beach is soon cleared, soldiers hasten from all the ships to the land, and the discipline of the Romans prevails over the untaught daring opposed to them.

Submission and revolt.

The want of concert and unity, evils especially incident to small and uncivilized communities, prevented any rallying of the forces of the Britons after this discomfiture. In a few days the nearest tribes consented to send hostages. But while negotiations were in progress, the second division of ships, with the cavalry, after appearing in sight, was suddenly dispersed by a

storm. The shipping, too, in which the infantry had crossed, was so injured by the foul weather, and by the influx of a high tide, for which the invaders, in their ignorance of the coast, were not prepared, as to leave the soldiers who had landed without the means of return, should disaster render such a course expedient. In these altered circumstances the Britons withdrew secretly from the camp; the people everywhere removed their cattle and substance; and a vigorous attempt was made to ensure the departure of the enemy by leaving them without the means of subsistence.

British war-chariot.

Cæsar found his foragers everywhere beset and intercepted. They were safe only as protected by a considerable force. In these excursions the Romans felt the want of their cavalry, and the war-chariots of the natives greatly disconcerted them. These chariots had scythes fastened to the axle. The warriors who manned them threw themselves upon the ranks of the enemy, and added destruction with the spear and the sword to that inflicted by the scythe. Nothing could exceed their skill and courage in the management of these machines. They guided their horses with much dexterity, and leaped from the car to the ground, and from the ground to the car, with surprising rapidity. The commander of the chariot held the reins, and the one or more who rode with him did his bidding—much as we now see represented in the reliefs on the walls of Thebes and Nineveh. But a few destructive onsets sufficed to put the Romans on their guard; and as they never came to close fighting without being victors, the Britons soon became sensible that the invaders had resources at command which they could not hope to overcome.

The second submission.

Overtures for peace were renewed, and hostages promised. Cæsar, though he had proved equal to the exigencies which had surrounded him, was not insensible to his danger. He listened gladly to the proposals made to him, and embarked at once for the

coast of Gaul, leaving the Britons to send the promised hostages after him.

Rejoicings in Rome.

The best that could be made of the doubtful fortune which attended this enterprise was made of it in the reports sent to Rome. Fictions of all sorts were there clustered about it by those who expected to profit by such inventions. The Senate was convened to deliberate on the tidings, and a festival of twenty days was decreed in honour of an event which had so signally enlarged the territories of the state, and which promised to raise even the rude people of Britain to a place among civilized nations. Of this event, says Dion Cassius, Cæsar himself spoke in lofty terms, and the Romans at home entertained a wonderfully high opinion.

But Cæsar well knew that the work said to have been accomplished in Britain was still to be done. It was well that the most should be made of this first attempt. But if not followed by something more decisive, neither the fortunes of the general, nor the military reputation of the legions, would be found to have gained much by the experiment to which they had committed themselves.

Second invasion—Embarkation and passage.

Before leaving Gaul for the winter, Cæsar had assigned to his army its occupation during that interval, and had given special instruction that a larger number of transports and galleys than had been recently brought together should be placed at his service without delay. On his return from Italy in the spring, he found that the different harbours between Ostend and Boulogne were prepared to supply him with more than six hundred vessels, besides twenty-eight galleys. These transports had been all built for the occasion. They were now launched, and concentrated on the point where the five legions destined for this second invasion of Britain had been assembled. But during the first five-and-twenty days the wind continued to blow from the north. Towards sunset on the first day of favourable weather this multitude of vessels

put to sea, darkening its surface for some miles in breadth and distance, as they floated off towards Britain. On the break of day they found themselves drifted, by the tide, and by a westerly wind, considerably beyond their intended point of landing. By the return of the tide, however, and the help of their oars, they appear to have retraced their way to the entrance of Sandwich haven, beyond the mouth of the Stour, the spot now known as Pegwell Bay.

The Britons were not ignorant of the preparations which were being made during the winter in the harbours along the coast of Gaul, and knew the force with which the enemy was about to descend upon their shores. Of the hostages for which Cæsar had stipulated, a few only had been sent; and this failure was alleged as a sufficient reason for a second expedition. To hazard a general engagement with such an army was felt by the Britons to be dangerous. In this instance, accordingly, no attempt was made to resist the landing. But the natives had assembled in great numbers, and were prepared to watch the movements of the enemy, and to avail themselves of every possible advantage against him.

Cæsar's military operations.

Cæsar learnt that the Britons had taken their position on the shore of a small river—probably the Stour, about twelve miles distant. Having made provision for the safety of his ships, and left a guard of ten cohorts and three hundred horse in charge of them, he put his army in motion, under cover of the night, and by daybreak came upon the Britons on the ground they had chosen. The natives withdrew to a retreat near at hand, which, in the times of their wars with each other, had been fortified by a dyke and mound, and further strengthened by a stockade. Cæsar conducted his assault on this place with much caution; but the Britons had guarded against being surrounded, and after keeping the enemy in check for some time, they retired, without material injury, towards the interior. Cæsar prepared to move in the

same direction. But a messenger now came with tidings that a storm had separated the ships from their anchors, and dashed them against each other, many of them being stranded and wrecked, so as to have become useless. Cæsar commanded the soldiers to fortify their camp, and returned himself under a strong escort to the shore. The loss, however, did not prove to be so serious as reported. Forty transports were abandoned as worthless, but the remainder were put under repair. Every man who had followed the trade of a carpenter was taken from the ranks to be employed in this service. Workmen were also brought over from Gaul. During the next ten days and nights the sounds along the shore near Pegwell Bay were those of a busy dockyard. The damages being by that time repaired, Cæsar, to prevent a recurrence of such mischief, gave orders that the vessels should be drawn up on shore, and that the force left to protect them should strengthen its position by raising an entrenchment on the land side of their encampment.

Cassivelaunus.

The news of this disaster had given new courage to the Britons. Hostilities with each other, in which they were engaged even at the moment of Cæsar's appearance among them, were now suspended, and the belligerents agreed to act together against the common enemy. The command of this combined force was given to a chief known to us by the name of Cassivelaunus, who ruled a people occupying a district of Middlesex bordering upon the Thames. His fighting men consisted of a large body of footmen, besides horsemen and charioteers. Cassivelaunus possessed a considerable advantage in his knowledge of the woods and marshes, and of the concealed pathways of the country. He hovered on the march of the Romans, galled them from ambuscades and thickets, and assailed them vigorously with his horsemen and chariots, often on ground where attacks by such means were not to have been expected. But one enterprise of this nature brought him into collision with a large body of

cavalry on forage, and with a complete legion of infantry following to sustain it. In this encounter the slaughter of the Britons was so great that no second assault on that scale was attempted.

This advantage gained, Cæsar ventured further into the country. He appears to have crossed the Medway near Maidstone, and the Thames at a place called Coway Stakes, near Chertsey—a spot where the old river still curves its way beautifully, while on the level land the rude forest has given place to the rich meadow and the cottage homestead. At this point, where alone the river was fordable, the natives had driven stakes in the water, and had lined the bank on the opposite side with a stockade. The cavalry entered the river first, the infantry followed close upon them, and could with difficulty keep their chins above the water in their passage. But both divisions succeeded in making their way to the opposite bank, and the natives were soon forced from their defences.

The war from this time was one of devastation, each party striving to cut off all means of subsistence from the other. Cæsar restored a king whom the Trinobantes, a people inhabiting a part of Essex and Suffolk, had deposed. Five other communities, with their chiefs, made their submission. As a last expedient, Cassivelaunus urged the people of Kent to attack the cohorts which Cæsar had left on the coast, and to endeavour to destroy his ships. But the assault, though made with promptitude and vigour, was not successful. The next event was the submission of Cassivelaunus himself; and Cæsar, who had consumed much more time in this enterprise than comported with his plans, readily accepted the promise of tribute from the different peoples belonging to the strip of territory he had visited, and taking with him hostages for the payment, he returned to Gaul. His chief spoil from this expedition was a large number of captives.*

The final submission —departure of Cæsar.

* Of the importance attached to this alleged conquest of Britain by Cæsar and the Romans, we may judge from the following passages in

Value of Cæsar's testimony—character of British resistance.

Our knowledge of what Cæsar did in Britain comes mainly from his own pen. He has not, perhaps, exaggerated his own losses. In one view, his policy would not dispose him to underrate the country he had invaded, or the people whom he had been at so much pains to subdue. On the other hand, it must be remembered that he did not accomplish the work to which he had committed himself, and he may have been willing that the region should be judged as not worthy of greater effort. His account of Cassivelaunus places that chief before us as a man whose genius had raised him above his contemporaries. But the jealousy with which his power was regarded by his neighbours was fatal to the unity which could alone have made resistance successful. Even the Roman yoke would seem to have been preferred by some to the undue ascendency of this native prince. They were brave men, however—not a few of these old Britons; magnanimous and unselfish men, in their way, prepared to hazard every possible loss, rather than lose their rude sense of independence and freedom. It was this feeling in the past which had made Rome great. But such feeling was now almost wholly of the past. The lawlessness of the republic was about to give place to the order of a military despotism: and during the next hundred years Rome is so much occupied in a struggle to conserve weighty interests nearer home, as to be little inclined to engage in an enterprise so costly as would be necessary to ensure the conquest of Britain. Augustus, indeed, threatened something of this nature more than once. The tribute imposed by Cæsar was

Dion Cassius: 'To what purpose (said Cæsar) have I so long possessed the proconsular power, if I am to be enslaved to any of you, or vanquished by any of you here in Italy, and close to Rome—I, by whom you have subdued the Gauls and conquered the Britons' (lib. xli. § 34). 'But here, within these walls, he (Cæsar), perished by conspiracy, who had led an army even into Britain in security' (*ibid.* § 49). 'To be trodden underfoot (said Augustus) by an Egyptian woman would be unworthy of us, we who have vanquished the Gauls—and passed over to Britain' (lib. 4, § 24).

rarely paid, and his successor was wise in not attempting to enforce the payment. Augustus contented himself with levying a tax on British goods imported into Gaul and into the Rhine provinces. Tiberius followed the example of his predecessor in this respect, and the joint reign of these two princes extended to nearly eighty years.*

Progress of Britain during the next century.

During the century which followed the departure of Cæsar from the shores of Britain, the country appears to have made considerable advances. Commercial cities had grown up and become flourishing along the whole coast from Friesland to the Rhine, especially along the banks of that great river. It is evident that the Britons had become considerable traders in all those quarters. The site of modern London was passed and repassed by Cæsar, but nothing existed there at that time to attract his attention. He does not name it. A hundred years later, Londinum had not only come into existence, but had become a place of great traffic. The people resident there, were partly foreigners, who had settled there for the purposes of trade, and partly natives who were disposed to occupy themselves in industrious callings. The most powerful prince at that time in Britain was Cunobeline, the successor of Cassivelaunus as king of the Trinobantes. Camulodunum, his capital, stood on the ground where Colchester has since stood. Coins were struck there in his name, with Latin inscriptions, which bespeak considerable progress in art and trade, and a free intercourse, not only with Gaul, but with countries more remote. Camulodunum was only one among many cities which, with their adjacent towns and villages, covered the large territory subject to the sway of Cunobeline. In those later times the curious and the idle in Rome were often gratified by seeing distinguished persons of both sexes among them from this island. In the popular literature of Rome men-

* Tacitus, *Agric.* § xiii.

tion is often made of Britain, and the mention is of a kind to show that the Britons of the time of Claudius must have been a very different people from those described by Cæsar. There is, indeed, room to suspect, that as Cæsar could not conquer Britain, he had his reasons for conveying the impression that it was not really worth conquering. However this may have been, the Britain which did ultimately submit to the authority of Rome was certainly a country of considerable industry and wealth. If the Britons of Cæsar's time were wont to delight in human sacrifices, to paint or stain their bodies in barbarous fashion, and to have the wives of a family in common, nothing of this would seem to apply to the Britons described by Tacitus and Dion Cassius. This is a fact of importance in relation to our early history, and should be marked by the student.

Malcontent Britons look to Rome for redress.

In the time of Caligula, who succeeded his uncle Tiberius, Cunobeline banished his son Adminius. The exile threw himself at the feet of the emperor, and affected to surrender the British territory to Roman protection. Caligula announced the event to the Senate and to the people as an affair of great moment, and gave orders that an army of two hundred thousand men should be at once assembled on the coast of Gaul. The army was brought together. In its presence the royal galley was rowed off with much ceremony into the sea. The emperor then returned to the land, ascended a lofty throne, and amidst the sound of trumpets gave signal to his soldiers as if for an engagement. But when the legions inquired for the enemy, they were told that they had witnessed the conquest of the ocean, and that they were to disperse and gather shells on the beach as in token of their triumph! Such are the men who come to be masters over armies and nations when armies and nations come to deserve no better. The sycophant Senate decreed to this man the honours of a triumph. This was in A.D. 40.*

Caligula's expedition.

* Suetonius, *Calig.* 46, 47. Dion Cass. lix. § 25.

We hear no more of Adminius. But three years later a British prince named Beric solicited help from the Emperor Claudius against his competitors for power in this country. It thus seems to have grown into a usage for aggrieved parties in Britain to make their appeal to Rome; and it was in vain, it seems, that the Britons demanded that such malcontents should be delivered up to them. The emperor did not want a pretext for the invasion of Britain. The non-payment of the tribute was a sufficient plea. Claudius remembered that Cæsar's invasion of Britain, futile as it was, had contributed not a little to his fame; and he hoped that he might accomplish what that great commander had only attempted. But Aulus Plautius, a general of high reputation, was chosen to collect the necessary forces, and to commence the war. The general found his legions strongly opposed to the enterprise. They spoke of the treachery of the British coast, and of the difficulties that would arise from the nature of the country, and the mode of warfare pursued by the people. They became, in fact, mutinous. But the emperor insisted on obedience, and after a while they returned to their duty. The force embarked consisted of four legions, about twenty-five thousand men, besides a complement of auxiliaries, probably not less numerous. The adverse weather which the armament encountered was very much what the veterans had predicted. But the ships had been separated into three divisions, as a precaution against local disasters; and after some delay landing was effected by them all without resistance, apparently at Richborough, Lymne, and Dover. The Britons had heard of the mutinous spirit among the soldiers, and had been willing to believe that the project would be abandoned. But this false confidence was soon at an end.

Invasion under Plautius and Claudius.

The duty of resistance rested mainly with the Trinobantes, who were in the first rank among the Britons of the south. Cunobeline, the king of that

people, deputed the command to his sons Caractacus and Togodumnus. The Britons knew the disadvantage that would attend them in an open encounter with such an enemy. They contrived to annoy the invaders from the skirts of the forest and the marsh, and from the banks of rivers. In this kind of warfare the general found his auxiliaries more available than his legions. To the astonishment of the natives, the Batavian horse swam across a broad river and attacked them on the opposite bank. This river we suppose was the Thames. If not the Thames, it must have been the Severn, and our knowledge on this subject, limited as it is, forbids our supposing that Plautius had penetrated so far. In one of these river conflicts, Togodumnus, the British leader, was slain. On most occasions the advantage seems to have been with the Romans. But though much danger had been braved, nothing decisive had been done. It was in this campaign that Vespasian, the emperor of a later day, gave the first proof of his high military genius. In his pursuit of the enemy he was one day so hemmed in that his escape seemed to be impossible. But his son Titus, who saw his danger, rushed upon his assailants with such ardour that they fell in all directions, and his father was saved.*

Plautius no doubt knew that to acquire distinction in this war, whether deservedly or not, would be grateful to the emperor. He was to apprise his sovereign if the posture of affairs should be such as to require his presence; and his presence was hardly solicited before he was on his way towards the army encamped near the Thames. The camp was impatient for his arrival. It was a new thing for the legions to have an emperor at their head, not merely on parade, but in a real war. All were intent on some achievement worthy of the occasion. Camulodunum itself

* Dion Cass. lib. lx. § 30. Suetonius, *Claud.* xvi.–xxiv. Tacitus, *Agric.* xiii.

was the first point of attack. That city consisted of a large enclosure, including, beside the residence of the chief, many of the houses and huts of his people, with space used for the shelter of flocks and herds in time of danger. The Trinobantes faced the enemy in front of their capital. But the issue was against them. Claudius was hailed as 'imperator' by the army several times in the space of sixteen days, which seems to say that it cost more than one struggle to accomplish the fall of so powerful a section of the British people. But the subjection was complete. Claudius returned to Rome. The Senate not only decreed him a triumph, but gave him the name of Britannicus, provided that the name should pass from the father to the son, instituted annual games in commemoration of the event, and reared triumphal arches in Rome and in Gaul.*

Claudius, on leaving Britain, assigned the territory north of the Thames to the care of Plautius, and that on the south side of the river to Vespasian. But Britain was not yet conquered. The natives were still for the greater part in arms. Caractacus was not among those who had made submission. He ceased not to harass the detachments under Plautius. Whatever loss he sustained seemed to be speedily repaired, and the courage of himself and of his followers remained unbroken. During the five years that Plautius held command in Britain Caractacus pursued this course towards him without intermission. In the south Vespasian kept his footing, but with difficulty, and at the cost of fighting more than thirty battles.

Plautius succeeded by Ostorius.

In A.D. 50, Publius Ostorius was appointed governor of Britain. He found the country in a very unsettled state. The winter season was approaching. The new general having a new army to command, the Britons presumed that he was not likely to commence operations before the spring. Filled with this idea,

* Dion Cass. lib. lx. § 23.

they began ravaging the different parts of the island that had submitted to the Roman yoke. Ostorius saw that the enemy must be at once made sensible that they had a man of promptitude and vigour to deal with. He summoned his cohorts, and marched rapidly from place to place. The Britons were generally taken by surprise, and cut to pieces or dispersed. To secure the advantages thus gained, a chain of forts was raised along the banks of the Avon, and on the Gloucestershire side of the Severn. It was hoped that the malcontent feeling among the Britons would be shut up by this means within the space beyond those rivers.

Defeat of the Icenians.

But the Icenians, whose country embraced a great part of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, and Huntingdonshire, and who had not hitherto committed themselves against the Romans, now took up arms on the side of their country. Some adjacent states joined them, and an undue estimate of their strength, so common with uncivilized men, disposed them to challenge a decisive action. The spot chosen by them was enclosed by a high embankment of earth, leaving only one point as an entrance from the level ground. This seemed to render the Roman cavalry useless. But Ostorius ordered the men to dismount, and to join with the infantry in storming the place. The assault was successful. The Britons, shut in by their own fortifications, and pressed from many points, were thrown into disorder. But their courage did not fail them. 'They fought to the last,' says Tacitus, 'and gave signal proofs of heroic bravery.'

From the country of the Icenians Ostorius marched against the disaffected in Cheshire and Lancashire. But Cheshire and Lancashire were very rude and thinly peopled districts in those days. The Britons in those parts avoided any general engagement. While overrunning those quarters, news came that the Brigantes, on the other side of the Yorkshire hills, were in arms. Scarcely had tranquillity been restored

BOOK I. CHAP. 3.

Caractacus and the Silures.

in that direction, when it was reported that the Silures had again taken the field.

The Silures, besides being the bravest, and the most skilled in their own kind of warfare, among the Britons, were filled with confidence at this juncture by the presence of Caractacus—a chief whose valour and enterprise had made his name familiar to the whole island. No man better knew the country, and no man could better avail himself of its advantages against an enemy. Having drawn to his standard from his own territory, and from other parts, all who were most disposed to look on submission to Rome as servitude, he resolved to place his fortune on the issue of a battle. The spot chosen by him is supposed to have been near the hill called Caer-Caradoc, in Shropshire, where the waters of the Clune and the Tame join. The slopes descending from this position were rough and steep, and it was protected in other parts by a rampart formed of huge stones, while the land below was bordered by a river, not formidable, but in places of uncertain footing. Between the mountain fortress and the river, Caractacus disposed his warriors in the order of battle. The chiefs were seen busy in marshalling their followers. All did what they could to banish the idea of fear, and to stimulate their men to the utmost. Caractacus himself was in every part of the field, and his brave words, as he flew from rank to rank, called forth shouts of applause. All bound themselves by a solemn oath to prefer death to slavery. The sight was not a little menacing. Ostorius looked at it with misgiving. First he saw a river to be forded; then a stockade to be forced; then a steep and craggy hill-side to be surmounted; and last, a succession of rude forts to be taken, which the fierce multitude before him were prepared to defend to the utmost. But the Roman soldiers did not share in the manifest hesitancy of their general — they showed themselves impatient for the onset. Valour can do all things, was their cry, and the officers joined

Defeat of Caractacus.

in the cry of their men. Let it so be was the answer of Ostorius. The general looked carefully to the ground, and having marked the weaker points of the enemy, gave the signal for battle. The river was soon crossed, and the Romans made their way to the parapet. But there the missive weapons of the natives fell like hail upon their assailants, and the advantage was with the Britons. Checked thus formidably, Ostorius ordered his men to advance under a military shell—a sort of roofing over their persons formed by conjoining their shields. Under this covering they once more approached the parapet, and succeeded in levelling the loose and massive stones which had served the Britons as an elevated breastwork. The Britons retreated in some disorder to the summit of the hill; the Romans pressed eagerly upon them under a destructive shower of darts. In the hand-to-hand struggle which ensued, matters were not equal. No helmet covered the head of the Briton, no coat of mail protected his breast. The swords and javelins of the legions, and the sabres and spears of the auxiliaries proved irresistible. The slaughter which followed was great, and the issue was decisive. Among the captives were the brother, the daughter, and the wife of Caractacus. The battle of Caer-Caradoc was to the Britons what the battle of Hastings became to the Anglo-Saxons. If there was a difference, it consisted mainly in the fact that the struggle of the Britons in defence of their freedom before that day, and their efforts to recover it when really lost, were greater than will be found in the corresponding period of Anglo-Saxon history? But the cause of this difference should perhaps be sought, not so much in the greater courage of the Briton, as in the better power of calculation possessed by the Saxon.

His entrance into Rome.

'Caractacus,' says Tacitus, 'fled for protection to 'Cartismandua, queen of the Brigantes. But adver- 'sity has no friends. By that princess he was loaded 'with irons, and delivered up to the conqueror. He

'had waged war with the Romans during the last nine 'years. His fame was not confined to his native island: 'it passed into the provinces and spread all over Italy. 'Curiosity was eager to behold the heroic chieftain who 'for such a length of time made head against a great 'and powerful empire. Even at Rome the name of 'Caractacus was in high celebrity. The emperor, willing 'to magnify the glory of the conquest, bestowed the 'highest praise on the valour of the vanquished king. 'He assembled the people to behold a spectacle worthy 'of their view. In the field before the camp the præ-'torian bands were drawn up under arms. The followers 'of the British chief walked in procession. The mili-'tary accoutrements, the harness and rich collars, which 'he had gained in various battles, were displayed with 'pomp. The wife of Caractacus, his daughter, and his 'brother followed next; he himself closed the melan-'choly train. The rest of the prisoners, struck with 'terror, descended to mean and abject supplications. 'Caractacus alone was superior to misfortune! With 'a countenance still unaltered, not a symptom of fear 'appearing, no sorrow, no condescension, he behaved 'with dignity even in ruin.'

We all remember the interest with which we have read this passage of history in our early years, the sympathy with which we have listened to the fitting and noble sentiments which the captive prince has been made to utter on that occasion, and the delight with which we have seen the chains of the captives struck off, and heard the gracious words with which both the emperor and the empress pronounced them free.* On the following morning the Senate described the victory over Caractacus as not inferior in importance to the great events in the past days of Roman history —as when Syphax was led in chains through the city

* It is probable that in the quiet and prosperous times before the invasion under Claudius, Caractacus was under the care of Roman teachers. No prince in Gaul would have been without that advantage.

by Publius Scipio, when Pertinax appeared among them as the captive of Lucius Paulus, and when kings and princes were seen by the Roman people at the chariot wheels of other commanders.*

The Britons not subdued.

But even the fate of Caractacus did not extinguish the hopes of the Silures. They fell incessantly upon all stragglers and small detachments of the enemy. In one instance two whole cohorts were cut off and destroyed by them. Other tribes, encouraged by their successes, joined them in this kind of warfare. Ostorius had so much experience of this nature that he learnt to describe the Silures as a people who would never be conquered—their extirpation only, he said, could bring peace to the Roman settlement in Britain. In the midst of these hostilities Ostorius died. The Britons looked on the event as more important to them than a great victory. Before the arrival of his successor, a chief named Venusius, then at the head of the countrymen of Caractacus, defeated a whole legion under the command of Manlius Valens. Avitus Didius Gallus was the officer sent in the place of Ostorius. Didius restored the confidence of the army by a severe defeat of the Britons. But Didius was an old man, not equal to the vigorous prosecution of such a war. The conduct of it was left in consequence, for the most part, to subordinate officers. One of these, however, gained a victory over a considerable army of Britons. In A.D. 58 Didius was succeeded by Veranius, who made successful incursions into the territories of the disaffected, but died within a year after his arrival. The chief command in Britain then passed to the hands of Caius Suetonius Paulinus, one of the ablest generals in the service of the empire. Suetonius was a man of great ambition, bent on being not less distinguished than the greatest commander of his time; and Britain was the field in which this dream of eminence was to be realized.†

Suetonius.

* Tacitus, *Ann.* xii. 32–38. *Agric.* xiv.

† Ibid. xii. 40; xiv 29. *Hist.* iii. 45.

Venusius, who had defeated the Roman legion under Manlius, had married Cartismandua, the queen of the Brigantes, the woman who had betrayed Caractacus. The disaffection called forth among the subjects of Cartismandua by her treachery, and some other causes, led to a civil war, in which the party adhering to the queen sought the protection of the Romans; while Venusius, her husband, who had been her armour-bearer, and whom she had married since she became queen, called upon her to surrender her sovereignty to him, and placed himself at the head of the Britons who were in arms against the invaders. Since the defeat of Caractacus, Venusius was the most able commander among the natives.

Slaughter of the Druids.

Suetonius was aware that religion, hardly less than patriotism, contributed to keep alive the disaffection of the Britons. In their transactions with the Gauls the Romans had learnt to regard the Druids with distrust and aversion. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, so firmly avowed by those ministers of religion, and received with so much confidence from their lips by their people, was an offence to the Roman, who was pleased to regard his own scepticism on all subjects of that nature as a result to be expected from civilized modes of thought. In this Druid teaching, the natural in man gave the lie to the artificial, and the artificial could hardly fail to be displeased. This presumption of barbarism, moreover, was a presumption of which a potent use was made. The hold upon the future which this doctrine gave to the Druid made him master of the present. By filling the mind of the people with false hopes from this source, he could at pleasure stimulate them to insurrection, and to the most daring enterprises. Thus the Druids were politically formidable; and to prepare the way for their extermination, the most atrocious things were laid to their charge. Historians, orators, and poets contrasted the dark forests of the priests of Gaul and Britain with the sylvan scenes which had been sacred

to religion in Greece and Italy; and to the gay ceremonies and the festive pleasures of their own worship, they opposed the Druid priests slaying human victims, lustrating the trees of the forest with human gore, and calling up every horror that might scare the imagination, and make the worshippers their victims. In reading such descriptions it becomes us to remember that it had been ruled that the Druids should be disposed of, and it had become expedient to give the bad name as preliminary to that proceeding. Even Augustus infringed his general law of tolerance by forbidding any observance of the Druidical rites in Rome. Tiberius went further, and Claudius not only decreed the extinction of those rites even in Gaul, but acted on that decree with much rigour. In Britain, the island of Mona, now Anglesea, was known to be the stronghold of the Druids, and Suetonius resolved to assail them in that retreat.

Ostorius had carried the Roman eagles far in that direction. There were British roads along which infantry and cavalry might march even to such distances, without difficulty; but the baggage and provision departments would remain to task the patience and ingenuity of a commander. The approach of Suetonius to the Menai Strait would probably be from Chester. On reaching its bank, the general issued orders that flat-bottomed boats should be prepared to convey the infantry across. The cavalry were to endeavour to ford, and if that should be found impracticable, the men were to take their place in the boats, and to draw their horses through the water after them. We shall allow Tacitus to describe the scene which presented itself as the Roman soldiers approached the opposite shore, and what followed when a landing was secured. 'The shore of the 'island was lined with the hostile army, in which were 'women dressed in dark and dismal garments, with 'their hair streaming to the wind, bearing torches in 'their hands, and running like furies up and down the

'ranks. Around stood the Druids, with hands spread 'to heaven, and uttering dreadful prayers and imprecations. The novelty of the sight struck our soldiers 'with dismay, so that they stood as if petrified—a mark 'for the enemy's javelins. At length, animated by 'their general, and encouraging one another not to fear 'an army of women and fanatics, they rushed upon the 'enemy, bore down all before them, and involved them 'in their own fires. The troops of the enemy were completely defeated, a garrison placed in the island, and 'the groves which had been the consecrated scenes of 'the most barbarous superstitions were levelled to the 'ground.'* Such were the sights to be seen some eighteen centuries since, on a spot where modern science has erected some of its most wonderful trophies. The Menai Strait is at present almost a fairy land, so rich is it both from art and from nature. Coupled with the surrounding scenery, and seen under the sunlight of a summer evening, it is one of the most beautiful scenes in Europe, hardly exceeded in loveliness by the shores of Greece or the passage of the Bosphorus.

Oppressive rule of the Romans.

While the severe policy of Suetonius, so characteristic of the military history of ancient Rome, was producing its natural effect on the mind of the Britons, another feature of the Roman ascendency, was calling forth the effects no less natural to it elsewhere. The destructiveness of the Roman sword was not more notorious than the rapacity of Roman officials. The writings of Roman authors teem with evidence on this subject. In the times now under review, the solicitude of nearly all educated men in Rome was to secure some government appointment, and having obtained it, to use every available expedient to make it as productive as possible, and in as short a time as possible. The descriptions of the extortion, fraud, and violence resorted to by this class of men, are often

* Tacit. *Ann.* xiv. 30. *Agric.* xiv.

so revolting as to seem almost incredible. Of wrongs in this form a full share fell to the lot of the subjugated Britons. Nero was now upon the throne, and the season was one of more than ordinary licence among the imperial officers in the provinces.*

Insurrection under Boadicea.

Prasutagus, who ruled over the Iceni, had long been the ally of Rome. He was known to be a man of some wealth; and in the hope of securing at least the half of it to his family, he left it to be divided equally between his daughters and the emperor. But Catus, the procurator, seized the whole, and the military at the same time took possession of the country. Boadicea, the widow of Prasutagus, protested against these proceedings. To punish her presumption, she was scourged in the manner of a slave; and her daughters were taken from her by the officers and dishonoured. If such a course could be taken towards such persons, we may imagine what the grievances were which often fell on parties in inferior conditions. In fact, it is easy to believe that the language of the Britons at this juncture was such as Tacitus has attributed to them. Our sons, they said, are torn from us, and made to serve in the Roman armies, as if it became them to be prepared to die for anything rather than for their country. Our houses are entered at all hours by mean and licentious officials, who rob us according to their pleasure. The head of the military plays the tyrant over our persons, and the head of the government plays the spoliator in regard to our substance; and between them they make life not worth possessing, if to be possessed only under such conditions. The rich and the poor are fast descending to one level, and the strong are made to submit to every sort of humiliation from the hands of the weak. Our forefathers resisted Cæsar, and the enemy was taught to respect our coast for a hundred years to come. To be as free as our fathers, we have

* Tacitus, *Ann.* lib. xiv.

only to be as resolved and as brave.* That the Britons thought and felt in this manner we can readily believe, whatever doubt we may have of their ability to express themselves exactly in such terms.

Massacre of the Romans.

While Suetonius was engaged in his expedition against Mona, discourse to this effect became general and loud among the natives; and the treatment of Boadicea and her daughters sufficed to raise the embers of disaffection, everywhere existing, into a flame. The Britons assembled in vast multitudes. Every day added to their numbers. Their first onset was at Camulodunum. In that settlement, for some weeks before, strange sights, and unnatural voices, at the dead of night, had seemed to betoken the approach of some great calamity. When the outbreak began, the Britons reduced everything in Camulodunum to ashes, putting the garrison, and every stranger, to the sword. The ninth legion marched in the direction of that colony in the hope of being in time to save the garrison. But they were met by the insurgents, surrounded, and the whole of the infantry destroyed. Petilius, the commander, and a portion of the cavalry, were all that could escape. Catus Decianus, the obnoxious procurator, with the courage generally found in such men, hurried to the coast, and sought refuge in Gaul.

Suetonius, on receiving tidings of these events, prepared to move southward. He had achieved a difficult enterprise, but he had now to retrace his steps, and to find himself beset with new dangers. He found the country everywhere in the hands of the insurgents. In the language of Tacitus — 'He 'marched through the midst of the enemy to Lon-'dinum [London], which was not yet honoured with 'the name of a colony, but considerable from the resort 'of merchants and from its trade. Here, hesitating 'whether he should make that town the seat of war, he

* Tacitus, *Ann.* lib. xiv.

'considered how weak the garrison was, and, warned by 'the check which Petilius had incurred by his rash- 'ness, he determined to preserve the whole by sacri- 'ficing one town. Nor did the tears and lamentations 'of the people imploring his assistance, prevent him 'from giving the signal for marching, though he re- 'ceived into his army all who were disposed to follow 'him. But all those whom the weakness of sex, or the 'infirmities of age, or attachment to the place, induced 'to stay behind, fell into the hands of the enemy. The 'same calamity befel the municipal town of Veru- 'lam.'* The historian adds, that seventy thousand citizens and allies were said to have perished in those places. We are disposed to think, however, that the number of the slain has been greatly exaggerated. It is not probable that the population left in such circumstances, in the town of Verulam, and in a place 'not yet honoured with the name of a colony,' could have amounted to seventy thousand. But that the destruction was terrific in extent, and meant so to be, may be readily believed.

Everything rested now with the skill and firmness of Suetonius. Such was the fear which had been diffused by these disasters, that the second legion hesitated to join his standard. By collecting contributions of men from every garrison, he succeeded in raising his army to ten thousand, including cavalry. With this force he determined to give battle to the multitude which had obeyed the call of Boadicea. The spot chosen by him gave him a dense forest in the rear, and an open plain in front. The legionaries were marshalled in a succession of deep ranks. The light-armed troops were disposed around in companies. The flanks were covered with the cavalry. The Britons were seen bounding from place to place in companies and groups. So flushed were they with their successes, and so confident of victory, that they had

* *Ann.* lib. xiv. §§ xxix. xxx.

brought their women with them in waggons, to be the witnesses of their achievements. The Roman historians describe Boadicea as a woman above the ordinary stature, with a countenance expressive of lofty and resolute purposes. They speak, as we have seen, of her yellow hair descending to her waist; of her richly coloured dress, and her ornaments of gold. So attired she rode, with her daughters, in her war-chariot, from rank to rank, addressing patriotic sentiments to one tribe after another, on the eve of the battle. The drift of her appeal is said to have been, that she thought little of her descent from noble ancestors, or of her position as one possessed of sovereignty and wealth. She was before them as one of themselves, and as such was prepared to brave the worst in the cause of their common liberty. She was bent, also, on avenging the indignities that had been inflicted on her person, and the dishonour that had been done to her children. Proof enough had been given that no right or feeling of humanity could be safe where Rome should be ascendant. Death itself was to be coveted if compared with life under such a rule. But the gods, who had borne long with this wickedness, would bear with it no longer. Hitherto their enemies had fallen before them, or fled to their hiding-places. It was only needful they should be brave as heretofore, and the fate of the second legion would be that of the army now in their view. Their shouts, their numbers, and their courage would do all. But come what may, should the men consent to live and to be slaves, as for herself, a woman, her resolve was to be victorious or perish.

Suetonius, we may be sure, needed no one to remind him that a day had come which would cover him with dishonour, or do much to gratify his long-cherished thirst of military renown. We can imagine him, as he passes on his war-horse from rank to rank, and as he glances, with closed lip and darkened brow, on the vast but ill-directed multitude spread out before him. It was natural he should speak on that day as Tacitus

tells us he spoke—that he should express his scorn of the savage hordes which had dared to face the legions of Rome; and that he should aim to stimulate the courage of his men, by setting forth the shame and disaster that must be attendant on defeat, and the certainty that their discipline must more than suffice to counterbalance any want of numbers, should they only acquit themselves with their wonted fidelity and fearlessness. When the strife began, the legionaries received the first onset of the Britons in silence, but retained their lines unbroken. They then formed themselves into a wedge-shape, and marched steadily onward; the auxiliaries ranged themselves after the same manner; and the cavalry bore down upon the enemy with their spears levelled, everywhere clearing their way before them. The first charge, however, did not decide the fortunes of that dreadful day. The Britons rallied once and again. The legionaries were in danger of being exhausted; but the issue was in their favour. The natives, once thoroughly disordered, the waggons served to impede their flight, and the destruction which followed was horrible. Men, women, children, the very beasts which drew the carriages of the Britons, all perished under the weapons of an enraged soldiery. Eighty thousand natives are said to have fallen on that day; and it should be remembered that those who give us these numbers had the means, not only of estimating their own work, but of giving it a permanent record. Boadicea was faithful to her vow—she sought death by poison, rather than fall into the hands of such an enemy.*

Defeat and slaughter of the Britons.

The natural sequence to this field of blood would have been a reign of terror, even more terrible than any that had preceded. But the imperial government saw with alarm the dangers to which its legions, and its entire authority in Britain, had been exposed, and

Change in the Roman policy.

* Tacit. *Ann.* xiv. 31–39. *Vita Agric.* xv. xvi. Xiphilin. *ex Dione in Neron.*

became concerned that a more just and lenient spirit should be infused into the administration for the time to come. Suetonius, to whom such a policy could not be acceptable, was ere long recalled. Tarpilianus, Trebellius, and Bolanus, who became successively governors, sought peace rather than conquest. Eight years from the defeat of Boadicea thus passed. But by this time the affairs of the empire had become more settled. Vespasian, who had served in Britain, had become emperor, and during the eight years that followed, war was carried on with vigour against the Brigantes and the Silures. Petilius Cerealis, a man of the highest military reputation, conducted this war; and he was succeeded in command by Julius Frontinus, who so acquitted himself as not to suffer in comparison with such a predecessor. After five years of hostility the Brigantes were made to profess themselves the allies of Rome; and three years later, the war against the Silures was pushed with such vigour into the retreats and fastnesses of their country, that their strength was finally broken, and fear of serious annoyance in the future from that quarter came to an end.*

Government of Julius Agricola.

These events prepared the way for the administration of Cneius Julius Agricola, whose name has been made so familiar to later generations by the pen of Tacitus, his son-in-law. Agricola, in common with Vespasian, had seen considerable service in Britain. On his arrival, the Ordovices, one of the most warlike of the British tribes, had surprised a detachment of cavalry, and utterly destroyed them. Agricola summoned the army from its winter quarters, and resuming the old policy of governing by terror, he all but annihilated the offending nation.

In the fourth year of his administration Agricola had extended his conquests so far northward, that to

* Tacit. *Ann.* xiv. 37–39. *Vit. Agric.* viii. xvi. xvii. *Hist.* i. 9–60; ii. 97.

form a boundary of the Roman province in that direction, he constructed a chain of forts from the mouth of the Clyde across to the mouth of the Forth —that is, from Dumbarton to Edinburgh. His subsequent campaign along the eastern coast beyond the Forth, cannot be said to have been successful. In one respect it was a novelty in British warfare. The fleet of the Romans on the sea co-operated with the army on the land, carrying stores, making descents on the coast, and otherwise aiding the plans of the general. The Roman encampment, as it moved from place to place northward of the spot where Edinburgh now stands, exhibited a singular mixture of cavalry, infantry, and sailors—the soldiers and the seamen vieing with each other in their different tales of adventure, but all prosecuting their common enterprise in the same buoyant and hopeful spirit. In the one great engagement of that season the advantage was with the Romans, but their losses were considerable, and the issue could not be regarded as decisive. It was in the eighth and last year of his administration that the military genius of Agricola achieved its great work. In this enterprise the army included several cohorts of Britons, who by this time had been successfully initiated into the discipline of the Roman soldier.

Expedition against the Caledonians.

The Caledonians—the tribes inhabiting the north and the north-west of Scotland—appear to have regarded this campaign as likely to determine the future of their country. Dismayed as they had been at times by the skill and appliances of the Romans, if not by their courage, they were very far from having abandoned hope. Old feuds were forgotten. The feeling of patriotism prevailed over that of tribe or clan. The contributions of armed men from different quarters amounted to more than thirty thousand. Both youth and age, such as might have pleaded for exemption, were present, eagerly proffering their services. Among the chiefs at the head of those many

gatherings, the greatest was an experienced leader named Galgacus. Highly impassioned appeals are said to have been made by Galgacus to the Caledonians on the one side, and by Agricola to the Romans on the other. Both parties saw the interests at stake, and both were impatient for the fray. On the one side country and freedom were the issue, on the other honour and life.

Battle of Ardoch.

Agricola marshalled his eight thousand auxiliary infantry in the centre, and posted his three thousand cavalry as wings to the footmen. The legions were drawn up in the rear, at the head of the entrenchments—a reserve of Roman blood which was not to be spilt unless necessary. The Caledonians stretched their rank to a formidable width on the rising ground which they had chosen. But their more advanced line was ranged along the more level ground towards the foot of the acclivity. Considerable space remained between this line and the advanced cohorts of the Romans. In that space the cavalry and charioteers of the Caledonians rushed to and fro in great excitement. This show of numbers and spirit produced its impression. Agricola spread out his force to a greater breadth, that it might be less unequal to that of the enemy. But every man felt that what was thus gained in space was lost in strength. Some of the officers suggested that the legions in reserve should advance to the lines. But Agricola was not disposed to follow such counsel. He at once dismounted, sent away his horse, and placing himself near the colours of the infantry, the spot where the danger was expected to be thickest, gave the signal for battle.

The fight began with missive weapons, which were thrown from a distance. In this kind of fighting the Caledonians, and the Britons generally, were more skilled than the Romans. Agricola saw that the advantage was not with his men. He accordingly gave orders that some of the cohorts should charge

the enemy with the sword. This turned the scale. The small shields, and the long unpointed swords of the Caledonians, left them almost defenceless in a close encounter with such an enemy. The cohorts not only used their short swords with great dexterity, but dashed the bosses of their shields on the exposed heads and faces of their foes. Everything yielded to this onset. Other cohorts followed the example thus set them, and with like success. In the meanwhile the charge of the Caledonian horsemen and charioteers had been so furious, that the Roman cavalry had given way. The narrowness of the place neutralized discipline, by preventing anything like a regular combat. From this cause, and from the inequalities of the ground, the greatest confusion ensued. Horses without riders, chariots with no one to guide them, rushed from the ranks, and augmented the disorder. The reserved Caledonian force on the hill now descended to the strife, and, by outflanking the Romans, hoped to fall upon their rear. But Agricola commanded four squadrons of horse to charge this reserved force, which they did, and having passed through the line, wheeled round and fell upon the enemy from behind. This was the crisis of the struggle. All that followed was carnage. Many of the Caledonians fled in panic where there was no danger. Others refused to fly, and sold their lives as dearly as brave men in such circumstances could sell them. Not until nightfall did the Romans desist from the pursuit and the slaughter, chasing the fugitives to their last hiding-places in the hills, the forests, and the marshes. Ten thousand of the Caledonians fell in this engagement. The loss of the Romans was little more than three hundred. Such are the advantages of military art and discipline over mere military courage.

This battle is supposed to have taken place in a district known as the moor of Ardoch, at the foot of the Grampians in Perthshire. We can readily imagine the picture which the Roman historian describes

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as seen from the moor of Ardoch on the following day —the deep and melancholy silence that had come into the place of the cry and uproar of the battle; the hills deserted; the houses of the natives in the distance disappearing in fire and smoke; not a man to be found by any search for him; all a vast and dreary solitude.

Completion of the conquest of Britain.

By this victory Agricola may be said to have completed the conquest of the island. But, as commonly happens where sovereignty is despotic, the general served a jealous and an ungrateful master. Domitian recalled the successful soldier to Rome, and Agricola, on his return, consulted his safety by retiring to private life for the remainder of his days. In Britain his genius had achieved nearly all that could be accomplished; and by encouraging the arts of peace wherever the sword had ensured tranquillity, he had set an example of the kind of service in which his successors were to find their chief occupation.*

Interval of tranquillity —Hadrian, Antoninus.

Through eighty years from the death of Domitian, the imperial sceptre passed into the hands of wise and virtuous princes, and those years were to Britain years of peace. In A.D. 122 the Emperor Hadrian visited this island, in pursuance of his plan to inspect in person every part of his dominions. During his stay that prince caused a rampart of earth to be raised across the island from the Tyne to the Solway, which became known in aftertimes as the wall of Hadrian.† But in the reign of Antoninus Pius it was deemed prudent to restore the northern boundary of the province to its ancient limits as fixed by Agricola, and the works which that general had constructed across from the Clyde to the Forth were strengthened by a line of defence similar to that which Hadrian had raised more southward. The Caledonians had

* Tacitus, *Vita Agric.* xviii.–xl.

† *Script. Hist. August. Vita Hadrian.* 51–57. Xiphil. l. 792. Eutrop. viii. 7.

given frequent signs of disquietude, and the intention of this proceeding was to keep them more effectually in check.*

Accession of Commodus—disorder.

On the accession of the Emperor Commodus, in A.D. 180, this long interval of tranquillity came to an end. The conduct of the man in possession of the throne was such as to ensure disorder elsewhere. The Caledonians made their way to the southward of the wall of Antoninus, and were joined by many of the Britons in the northern district of the province. Ulpius Marcellus, the Roman general, a man of worth and capacity, succeeded, after several engagements, in checking the revolt, and in obliging the Caledonians to retire within their own borders. But in this instance also, the successes of the general made him an object of jealousy to his master; and concerning military proceedings in Britain after the dismissal of Marcellus, we know nothing for some years, except that the discords among the legionaries in these parts seemed to keep pace with the rapacity and corruption of the prætorians in Rome.†

In A.D. 192 we find Clodius Albinus at the head of the army in Britain; and five years later this general puts forth his claim to the purple in opposition to Septimius Severus. The two competitors met in that year near Lyons, where the defeat of Albinus was decisive. To prosecute this scheme Albinus had withdrawn the largest possible force from Britain. The Caledonians and northern tribes had seized on the occasion to assert their independence, and to make incursions southward.

Campaign and wall of Severus.

So serious had the aspect of affairs become, that Severus himself, though advanced in age, and a great sufferer from gout, resolved to assume the command of the army in this distant region. The emperor was

* *Script. Hist. August. Vita Ant. Pii*, 132; Eutrop. viii. 8.

† *Script. Hist. Aug. Vita Commod.* 275 *et seq.*; Xiphilin. lib. lxxii. § 8.

borne from place to place on a litter, but prosecuted the war with extraordinary ardour. The campaign, from its being chiefly through woods and marshes, proved to be, not only laborious and protracted, but most costly of human life. Xiphiline makes the loss of the Romans to have been fifty thousand. Ultimately the Caledonians were made to sue for peace, and peace was granted them.*

The memorable event in connexion with this enterprise was the erection of the famous wall of Severus. This wall was raised nearly on a line with that of Hadrian, but it did not consist, as in the former case, of a mere embankment of earth. It was constructed of stone, twelve feet in height, and eight feet in thickness, with towers and stations at given spaces along the whole distance. Parallel with the wall was a military way and a dyke—and all these works were extended from Tynemouth on the eastern coast of the island, to Bowness on the western. During two years the emperor employed his legions on this stupendous undertaking. The result was such as to justify even that amount of labour. Through a century and a half from this time the Caledonians rarely attempted to disturb the peace of the country thus protected. This wall was of course perpetually garrisoned and guarded.†

But domestic anxiety, in addition to age and impaired health, weighed heavily on Severus. His sons, Caracalla and Geta, were two of the most unprincipled and profligate men of the age—ready to purchase the gratification of their passions by any amount of crime. In the city of York, two years after the conclusion of his campaign against the Caledonians, the emperor died—more, we have reason to believe, from grief than from disease. His two sons were left joint heirs to

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* Aurel. Victor. *in Septim. Herodian*, iii. 20–22, 46; Xiphil. *ex Dione, in Sev.*

† Xiphilin. *ex Dione, Sever.* Orosius, vii. 11. Spartian. *Vita Sev.* Eutrop. Horsley, *Brit. Rom.* 61, 62, 116–158.

his authority. The young men were at enmity with each other, but both hastened to leave Britain that they might seize on the honours awaiting them in Rome, and surrender themselves to the pleasures that would be there at their command.

Another interval of tranquillity.

At this point another long interval occurs through which we find nothing, or next to nothing, in Roman authors concerning Britain. It is probable that the seventy years which followed from A.D. 211 to A.D. 284 were years of peace. The wall of Severus fenced off inquietude from the north. Submission had become general and settled in the south. Had there been commotion and bloodshed, history, which is so much occupied in recording such events, would not have been silent. The progress of order and industry is noiseless and imperceptible, and estimated truly only by the wise.

Division of the empire —Carausius.

In A.D. 284 Diocletian became emperor. In his time the empire was parcelled out between four princes— between himself and Maximian as emperors, and Galerius and Constantius as Cæsars. In the division of territory between these princes, Gaul and Britain fell to the lot of Constantius. But before this division had taken place, a fifth competitor had made his appearance. Carausius, an officer of distinction, had been sent by Diocletian to suppress the piracies of the Franks and Saxons, who began about this time to infest the narrow seas, and the coasts of Gaul and Britain, as freebooters. Carausius, however, was more intent upon enriching himself than upon executing the commands of the emperor. To escape the punishment with which he was menaced, he seduced the fleet committed to his charge from their allegiance, entered into an alliance with the pirates, and at last prevailed on the military in Britain to accept him as their chief. Maximian had deemed it prudent to sanction this usurpation. In A.D. 292 Constantius determined that an effort should be made to bring it to an end. But before the war had extended from Gaul to Britain.

Carausius was assassinated by Alectus, one of his officers, who assumed the purple in his stead. Alectus had been in possession of his ill-acquired power about three years, when he was defeated and slain; and the accession of Constantius to supreme authority in Britain, was hailed by all but the lawless as the advent of a deliverer.*

These events belong to the year A.D. 296. Nine years later, Diocletian and Maximian resigned the purple; and Constantius became emperor. But his imperial honours were of short duration. In the following year he died of sickness in the city of York. His son Constantine, afterwards Constantine the Great, then in Britain, became his successor. The reign of Constantine extended to something more than thirty years, and that interval was to Britain an interval of order and prosperity.†

The Picts and Scots.

But by this time the marauding tribes in the northern part of the island had come to be known by the names of Picts and Scots, and their incursions southward had grown to be more bold and frequent. The Emperor Constans, the second son of Constantine, engaged in a formidable expedition to chastise these intruders, but history reports little concerning the result. In the struggle between the usurper Magnentius and Constantius, the third son of Constantine, Britain shared, in common with the other provinces of the empire, in the miseries entailed by the rage of faction and of civil war.‡

But, from this time onward, the great trouble in this island arises from rude hordes of Caledonians on the land, and from the piratical attacks of the Franks and Saxons by sea. The inroads of the Picts and Scots

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* Eutrop. ix. 659. Aurelius Victor *in Constant. Eumen. Panegyr.* 8.

† Aurelius Vic. *in Vita Constantin. Eumen. Panegyr.* 9. Eutrop. x. 1. 11.

‡ Ammian. Marcelli. xx. c. 1; xiv. c. 5; xv. c. 5; xxii. c. 3. Eutrop. x. 6. Zosimus, ii.

had never been so successful and destructive as in the space from A.D. 364 to A.D. 367.*

Administration of Theodosius.

In the year last mentioned, Theodosius, one of the ablest and wisest generals of the age, came to Britain to punish these marauders. He found that they had penetrated to the heart of the country, from the Tyne to the Thames. The new general came upon them near London, laden with booty, and bearing away men, women, and children as captives. In a short time he forced the depredators, not only beyond the wall of Severus, but from the north of the Tyne to the north of the Clyde and Forth, and once more made the wall of Antoninus the boundary of the province, repairing its injuries, and adding to its places of strength. Cabals and treachery had weakened the Roman army; corruption had taken root in the civil service; but in Theodosius the province found the wise ruler and the able general. Both in the civil and military departments such improvements were realized, that the whole country seemed another home to those who dwelt in it. The new governor was soon recalled; but the effects of his administration remained, and a grateful people flocked in multitudes towards the point of his embarkation, and lamented his departure as that of a father. It was the son of this Theodosius who became emperor under that name.†

Maximus, the Britons, and Britany.

The interruption to the years of prosperity which followed came from the ambition of Maximus, an officer in the Roman army in Britain who aspired to the purple, and who induced the army and people of Britain to support his pretensions. Maximus had married the daughter of a British prince, had served under Theodosius the elder, and had done much to impart security and prosperity to the province. The British youth whom he had trained to arms, followed

* Ammian. Marcel. xx. c. 1; xxvii. c. 9.

† Ammian. Marcel. xxvii. c. 7; xxviii. 3, 7. Claudian. *Panegyr. Theod.*

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his fortunes on the Continent. They contributed to his early successes, and most of them survived his fate, but they never returned. They found their future home in the territory known as Armorica, to which they gave the name of Brittany. Some years later they were joined by a large body of their countrymen, who had been led into Gaul under similar circumstances.*

Withdrawment of the Romans.

Through the twenty years subsequent to the fall of Maximus, the distractions and weakness of the empire led to a gradual reduction of the army in Britain, until in A.D. 412, the last remnant was withdrawn. The story which remains is the melancholy one of which we shall have to speak elsewhere—the inroads of the Picts and Scots, the alleged pusillanimity of the Britons, and the invitation to the Saxons.

The work of the Roman sword in Britain.

Such as we have described was the revolution brought about by the sword in Roman Britain. The island, from Cornwall to the Grampians, passes into new hands. But this change is not the work of a day, or of a generation. It is achieved at great cost, and it is sustained at great cost. The Britons disputed every inch of ground once and again before surrendering it. The courage, the skill, and the spirit of endurance with which they defended their rude home and independence entitle them to our admiration. In such chiefs as Cassivelaunus and Caractacus we see what some of the greatest men in our later history would have been in the same circumstances. But after a while leaders of that order cease to appear. The warlike passions of the people cease to be what they had been. They dwell on the soil on which their fathers dwelt, but they have become men without a country. British authority, from being everywhere, ceases to be anywhere. The race which was once the sole possessor of the soil, retains its

* Sozomen. *Hist.* vii. 721. Prosper *in Chron. An.* 387. Gildas, c. 11; Nennius, xxiii. Rowland's *Mona*, 166, 167.

humblest homestead only upon sufferance. Ingenuity and industry are encouraged, but it is that they may be taxed. The able-bodied may become soldiers, but it is, for the most part, that they may be expatriated, and add to the strength of the power by which they have been themselves vanquished.

This, however, is no uncommon course of events in the history of nations. It is generally the precursor of something better, and, from the first, brings its good along with its evil. In this instance, an island which before the age of Cæsar had been a comparatively unknown land—an object rather of imagination than knowledge to civilized men—comes to be an opulent province in the most powerful empire the world had ever seen; and, through several centuries, a field for the display of the highest virtues and talents which that empire could furnish. The distance between the barbarous and the civilized can only be narrowed by degrees. The evil is, that civilized man is often more disposed to *use* than to *elevate* those who are beneath him.

CHAPTER III.

EFFECT OF THE ASCENDENCY OF THE ROMANS IN BRITAIN ON GOVERNMENT.

Popular assemblies among the Celts.

THE usages which served the purpose of law among the Britons are but imperfectly known to us. It is certain that the government of the different nations was monarchical, or by chieftainship. Of course the chief, as in all such communities, was much influenced by the feeling of his tribe or nation. Strabo describes the Belgæ, and the Gauls generally, as easily brought together in great numbers on public matters. On such occasions every man was forward to express his indignation against any kind of wrong inflicted on himself or his neighbour. One person was invested with authority to secure order. If any man attempted to interrupt a speaker he was admonished by this functionary to be silent; and should he disregard a third admonition, the sword of the officer was used to disgrace the offender, by depriving him of so much of his mantle as made the remainder useless.* Such conferences, no doubt, took place among the Britons.

British kings.

But the order of succession to the supreme authority appears to have been more fixed and hereditary among the Britons than among the Gauls. Exceptions to this rule did, no doubt, arise, but the rule remained. Thus the Trinobantes besought Cæsar that Mandubratius, the son of their late chief, might be invested with the authority of his father, and be protected in the same against the ambition of Cassivelaunus.† In later times,

* Strabo, lib. iv. c. 4, § 2. Cæsar, *de Bel. Gal.* iv. v. Tacit. *Vita Agric.*

† Cæsar, iii. 1.

more than one British prince sought the intervention of the authority of Rome on this plea.* It is clear, also, that the law of succession was respected even when a woman happened to be the next by birth. Thus Cartismandua was the reigning queen of the Brigantes, Boadicea of the Iceni.

Revenue.

The revenue of the British kings must have been raised by rude and irregular means. It came from three sources—from their own lands and possessions; from contributions made by their people; and from their allotted share in all booty, whether taken from an enemy, or, after the black-mail process, from neighbouring tribes.

Civil authority of the Druids.

The authority of these chiefs was restricted almost exclusively to questions of peace and war; and even in these cases, it was at their peril to slight the auguries of the Druids.† What the notions of right were which determined the conduct of one community towards another, or of one man towards another, we can only conjecture, as it was a part of the policy of the Druids that law should never be committed to writing. Cæsar, who mentions this fact, informs us that the Druids made use of writing on other occasions. What was known among the Britons under the name of law, had been thrown into verse, and passed from the memory of one generation of priests to another. Many years were occupied in the effort to acquire the knowledge so conveyed. Nor was this all—the Druids were not only the depositaries of law, they were its administrators. Everything legislative and judicial came thus under a priestly influence, and took a theocratic shape—after the manner of those eastern countries from which the Celtic tribes had migrated. The people were to believe, accordingly, that the voice of their laws was the voice of their gods. Fines, torture, and death were the punish-

* Suetonius *in Calig.* 44.

† Cæsar, *de Bel. Gal.* i. 50. Diod. Sic. v. 354. Strabo, lib. iv. c. 4.

ments of crime, whether against person or property, varying according to the magnitude of the offence. The rule by terror was rigorously adjusted, as in the case of all such communities. Evidence was admitted on oath, and might be obtained by torture; and acquittal might follow by compurgators or by ordeal. Such is the sum of our knowledge, resting on evidence more or less satisfactory, in regard to government among the Britons.*

Roman government.

The change from a government by unwritten laws, to a government by means of laws committed to writing, and reduced to a scientific system, is great. Such was one feature of the change in relation to government in Britain introduced by the Romans. But this change was not accomplished at once.

It was the wise policy of the Romans to regulate the exercises of their power according to circumstances. Where nothing beyond an annual tribute could be safely demanded, they were wont to profess themselves content with that concession, leaving the state in other respects in its original independence. This was all that Cæsar presumed to exact from the Britons as the fruit of his two costly invasions. As the sum in this instance is not mentioned, it is probable that the amount promised was not large. We know that it was a comparatively small number of the Britons only who were parties to that transaction, and that the payment, whatever it may have been, soon ceased to be made. In the language of Tacitus, the effect of the invasion by Cæsar was to 'show' the island to the Roman legions, not to give them possession of it.†

Roman colonization.

But where conquest and colonization were practicable, and could be made to yield honour and advantage, the aim of the Romans was to conquer and to colonize. Before the close of the first century of the Christian

* Diod. Sicul. v. 354. Strabo, lib. iv. c. 4, 5. Cæsar, *de Bel. Gal.* vi. 12–16.

† *Vita Agric.* xiii.

era, it was manifest that such objects might be realized in Britain, and we have seen the heavy price which Rome was prepared to pay that Britain might be thus allied to it. The veterans in the Roman army were allowed to be gainers by any successful experiment of this nature, considerable portions of the conquered lands being always assigned to them. People not connected with the army or with the government, from Rome or other places, were encouraged to seek a home for industrial purposes in the settlements so formed, and might be vested with the privileges of Roman citizens. Hence the population in such places often grew with amazing rapidity. In regions which had been comparatively desert and barbarous, populous and opulent cities made their appearance in which the arts and refinements of Rome itself became suddenly naturalized. Such in this country was the early history of Caerleon and Lincoln, of Chester and York.*

In the progress of things towards this issue, it sometimes happened that the Romans allowed the princes whom they had vanquished to retain the appearance of ruling as in time past. But this was only that both princes and people might be subdued more effectually from being subdued by degrees. It was easy to reign through a former king by using him merely as a tax-gatherer. Used as a tool for such a purpose, the functionary soon became unpopular, and the people were not long unwilling to dispense with his presence altogether. Cogidumnus was a British prince who became a victim of this policy.†

Provinces of Roman Britain.

When, by means of this nature, as well as by the sword, the Romans had become sole masters of Britain, they divided its territory into six departments. But the sixth of these provinces, lying to the north of the friths of the Clyde and the Forth, was a province in

* Tacitus, *Agric.* c. 15, 16. *Ann.* lib. xiv. c. 31. Palgrave's *Commonwealth*, x. 350–358.

† Tacit. *Vita Agric.* xiii. Hors. *Brit. Rom.* No. 76, pp. 192, 332.

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name mere than in reality. The Romans never obtained any permanent footing in those parts. Nearly the same may be said of the fifth province, lying between the walls of Antoninus and Severus. That territory was subdued more than once, and more than once relinquished. But in the four remaining provinces the authority of Rome was ascendant and settled through more than three centuries. The first of these provinces, under the name of Britannia Prima, embraced the whole of that part of England which measured the distance from the Kent shore of the Thames to the Gloucestershire side of the Severn, and reached southward to the Land's End. The second division embraced the whole of Wales, with some strips of country which have since formed border lands to England. The great centre territory of England, bounded by the German Ocean on the east, and by the lands of Worcestershire, Shropshire, and Cheshire on the west, and extending northward from the Thames to the Humber, was the third province, and bore the name of Flavia Cæsariensis. Maxima Cæsariensis, the fourth province, was limited on the east and west by the two seas; and, measured northward, included the whole distance from the Humber to the Tyne.*

Colonies—Municipia—Latian Towns.

The settlements within these provinces were various, in accordance with the general law of the empire. The first in rank were the colonies. In these, which were only nine in number, the law and usage which obtained were, as nearly as possible, identical with those of Rome. Seven of these settlements are described as military colonies, two as civil. In the military colonies, the sons of soldiery, to whom shares in the neighbouring lands had been allotted, held them by a stern military tenure. Next in importance to the colonies came the municipal cities. The inhabitants of these places were to a large extent Roman

* *Notitia Imperii*, 49. Hors. *Brit. Rom.* 356 *et seq.* Henry's *Hist.* vii. app.

citizens, possessed their own magistrates, and within certain limits enacted their own laws. But York and Verulam were the only municipia in Britain. There were ten places which bore the name of Latian towns, where the imperial laws were administered, but in which the people were governed by their own magistrates, and every new magistrate, after his year of service, became a Roman citizen. Magistracy in all these cities was hereditary in leading families, and vacancies were filled up on a principle of self-election, or by nomination. As corporations, they very much resembled the close corporations of this country which were swept away by the late Municipal Reform Act. In corrupt times, these offices, as they imposed the duty of levying taxes, proved anything but desirable. Very severe penalties, accordingly, were provided against such as refused to act when called upon to do so. After the fourth century, and as a protection against abuses, the citizens were empowered to choose a Defensor, who acted as a popular representative in relation to the aristocratic body of magistrates. In the cities of Gaul the bishops generally filled this office. In cities not of the privileged class above named, the natives, and the residents generally, were not only subject to the imperial laws, but were precluded from all share in the administration of them. In course of time these restrictions were in some degree infringed, but to this effect was the polity set up by the Romans in Britain. To the last a strong line of demarcation was preserved between the conquerors and the conquered.*

The prefect.

The authority to which all things within these settlements, and through the four provinces, were

* Lipsius, *de Magn. Rom.* i. 6. The following are the names of the nine colonies: Richborough, London, Colchester, Bath, Caerleon, Gloucester, Lincoln, Chester. In the age of the Antonines the distinction between the colonies, the municipia, and the Latian cities was much effaced, and as the empire further declined they may be said to have disappeared.—Palgrave's *Commonwealth*, c. x.

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subject, was that of the prætor or prefect. Both the civil and the military power was vested in this officer. He commanded the army, appointed magistrates, and regulated every part of the administration. He was invested with these powers by the emperor, and to him he was responsible; but in all other relations his authority was supreme. During a long interval, large discretionary power was entrusted to the prefect, that he might be prepared to meet emergencies in distant provinces by more summary methods than the law could provide. This liberty, as will be supposed, was often grossly abused. In the reign of the Emperor Hadrian it came to an end. The 'perpetual edict' issued by that prince made the laws which were imperative in Rome to be imperative in the provinces.*

Procurator.

The only officer in the province who did not hold his appointment at the pleasure of the prefect was the procurator or quæstor. It belonged to this functionary, with his complement of officials, to collect the taxes, and to superintend everything relating to revenue. It often happened that the procurator acted, and was expected to act, as a spy on the proceedings of the prefect, making his report to the emperor concerning any excesses, or any suspicious proceedings in that quarter. In other instances the two officials were manifestly on terms understood between them, each leaving the other to make the best for himself of his position. But it was supposed that the imperial interests would be more secure by being placed thus in two hands, than by being left altogether in one. From experience, the tendency was to widen the distinction between these two authorities, rather than to diminish it.

The revolution as to government.

Thus in Roman Britain the powers of government passed wholly out of the hands of the natives, and remained to the end in the hands of the conquerors. The British princes gradually sunk into obscurity, and

* Tillemont, *Histoire des Empereurs*, ii. 264.

bowed at length, in common with their subjects, to the power which it had been found vain to resist. The two elements—the conquerors and the conquered—never blended. British youths were trained to arms, but it was, for the most part, that they might be drafted off to foreign service. Others were trained to arts, but it was that they might be tamed by such pursuits, and made passive, not that they might become qualified for public life, or rise to any political influence. The resistance of the natives had been so prolonged and determined, that the hope of any healthy amalgamation between them and the invaders was not entertained until the season for acting upon it with effect had passed.

Supposing the imperial laws to have been purely administered, the change introduced must have secured to the Britons great advantage in all suits between subject and subject. Their old Druid usages could hardly have given them the same degree of protection in such cases. And beyond a doubt the protection of property, and the encouragement to industry, conferred by the Romans, was an immense advance on anything of that nature which had existed previously, or could have existed under any other influence. But the laws in relation even to such matters were not always purely administered. Before the time of Hadrian, their authority seemed everywhere to diminish with the distance of the province to which they were to be applied; and after that time, the Britons had often too much reason to complain of the arbitrary and corrupt proceedings of their superiors. The account given by Tacitus of the reforms introduced by Agricola, shows pretty clearly what the ordinary state of things had been. He began with the reform of his own household, removing all slaves and freedmen from public offices. In regard to taxation, he took care, it is said, that the assessments should be just and equal. He put a check also on the tax-gatherer, whose extortions, real or suspected, were often more the ground of

disaffection than the tax itself. Collectors, it seems, had been used to require that all the produce of a district should be brought to some fixed place, where the producer should appear, and have the privilege of purchasing his own property at the reduced value fixed upon it by the government. By this custom, the expenses of carriage were added to the tax, and the feeling of dependence was wantonly embittered. Functionaries who could deem themselves at liberty to pursue such a course must have been an evil race to live under. In case of hardship in this form, or in any other, the Briton might appeal to the prefect; and if justice did not come from that source, the next appeal lay to the emperor. But it is obvious that only the wealthy could carry their suit to that ultimate tribunal, and the wealthy among the Britons were few.

Had it been possible to guard against such abuses, even the advantage to be derived from just laws justly administered may be too dearly purchased. In Britain, that political education of the people which comes naturally from the usages of self-government, was wholly wanting. The Britons were viewed too much as mere material to be used up in armies, or to be made as productive as possible in the hands of a revenue collector. But ruin is the natural issue of all governments based on such maxims. In general, if the governed are not found to possess sufficient energy to cast off the yoke, they perish from exhaustion—the governed in the meanwhile being destroyed by their vices.

Much land passed into the hands of the emperors by a succession of confiscations, and more by their harsh custom of seizing on the property of all who died childless. It often happened that no man would take these government lands on the hard terms proposed, and in that case the little culture bestowed on them was by forced, that is, by slave labour. The far greater part of the land, however, remained in the

hands of the natives, but on conditions that were very onerous. The land-tax alone absorbed one-third of the net produce. Other taxes were levied in sea-ports, in all places of traffic, and in every man's home. For, besides the great tax on land, there were taxes on the sale of merchandize and of slaves, on mines, and on the person in the form of a poll-tax. Payments were also made to the government from all property left by will, and from all funerals.

Roman force in Britain.

Only by imposing such burdens was it possible to sustain so great an army as was generally stationed in this island. In the early times of the Roman ascendency in Britain, the army of occupation consisted of four legions, some 25,000 men, which, with the usual complement of auxiliaries, must have raised the settled force of the country to more than 50,000. The army in the field on some occasions, could not have been less than 50,000, irrespective of the numbers distributed in the various stations. From the *Notitia Imperii*, the official record of the functionaries and forces of the empire about the close of the fourth century, we learn that the army in Britain consisted at that time of two legions in place of four, but the total force then may be reckoned as 32,700 foot, and 4800 horse, in all 37,500 men.* The revenue adequate to sustain such a military establishment, and a civil establishment of corresponding magnitude, must have been great—much too great to have been furnished by the Britons, had not their condition been a great remove from barbarism.

* Horsley's *Britannia Romana*, book i. chap. vi.; book ii. chap. i., where the reader may find ample information on this subject.

CHAPTER IV.

REVOLUTION IN RELIGION.

Druidism—Britain its chosen asylum.

CÆSAR describes the religion of Gaul and Britain as the same. He further relates that the priests of Gaul who were desirous of becoming profoundly learned in the Druid lore, generally passed some time in Britain for that purpose.* The religion which the Celtic tribes brought with them from the East did not seek contact with other races, and coveted secrecy for the exercise of its more sacred rites. As this command of seclusion failed them in Gaul, they appear to have sought it in Britain; and even here to have retreated from the more populous and exposed regions on its southern coast, to the interior of the country, and to some of its remotest solitudes, as in the island of Mona. But where there is secrecy there will be suspicion; and the imagination of the classical writers has not failed to people the forest temples of the Druids with such forms of superstition and cruelty as were supposed to be natural to those who covet darkness rather than light. Enough of superstition and cruelty there was, but poetical inventions are of value only as poetry.†

Its theocratic theory.

The name Druid is supposed to have been derived from the oak, which was an object of special veneration with the priests of Gaul and Britain.‡ We have seen that the laws of the Britons were deposited in the mind of the Druids, and administered by them. So that they were not only priests, but in effect both

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* *Bel. Gal.* vi. 13.

† Lucan. *Phars.* iii. 397.

‡ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xvi. 44; Diod. Sicul. lib. v.

legislators and magistrates. In this fact their Oriental origin is clearly indicated. They were the ministers of a theocracy. So much were they venerated, that even peace and war, which seemed to be almost the only questions left purely to the authority of their kings, was a matter virtually under their control. The intervention of a Druid, we are told, was enough to stay the arm of combatants even when their rage was at the highest.* There were some distinctions of rank among them, and females were allowed to participate in the honours of the office. Besides the ordinary Druids, who attended to the usual priestly services, there appears to have been a limited class who were accounted the inspired persons—the minstrel poets and prophets of their order. The services of the Druids as priests and magistrates, and the fact that they alone possessed any knowledge of medicine, or of useful science generally, gave them command of a revenue which must have been large as coming from such a people. Above all, the spiritual power supposed to be vested in them was terrible. The body and soul, the present and the future, of the people for whom they ministered, were supposed to be in their hands.†

The popular doctrine of Druidism.

There is no room to doubt that the Druids had, in common with all the sacred castes of the East, their secret and their open doctrine. What the tenets or speculations were which might be divulged to none but the initiated, can be to us only a matter of conjecture. It is probable that they embraced traditionary conceptions, of a philosophical and religious nature, much more elevated than the doctrine taught to the people. In the popular doctrine, the future existence of the soul had a prominent place; but it was a future existence in which the retribution came from the con-

* Diod. Sic. lib. v. c. 31. Strabo, lib. iv. c. 4.

† Cæsar, *de Bel. Gal.* vi. 13. Strabo, lib. iv. c. 4. Pomponius Mela, *de Situ Orbis*, lib. iii. c. 2. Ammian. Marcel. xv. Diod. Sic. v.

ditions through which the soul passed in a series of transmigrations. Not less prominent were the lessons of the Druid on the duty of worshipping the heavenly bodies, and a multitude of divinities to whom the attributes, if not the names, of the gods of Greece and Rome were ascribed. It is highly probable that the moral teaching of the Druids was comparatively pure, discountenancing perfidy and violence, and inculcating good neighbourhood in the time of peace, no less earnestly than bravery and self-sacrifice in the time of war. Without high moral worth in some form, the Druids could hardly have been the object of so much veneration.*

Sacred groves.

The oaks of Mamre served as a temple to the Hebrew patriarch. The shadow of the oak was the temple of the Druid. Among a people with whom large covered buildings had no existence, there would be no such buildings for religious worship. To this fact, probably, more than to any lofty conception of the Supreme Being, we should attribute the Druid usage of worship in the open air, or beneath no other roofing than the overshadowing of ancient trees. But the secret places in these groves were as sacred as the recesses of any temple. Those natural sanctuaries, with their dim religious light, had been planted, cleared, and cultivated so as to serve most of the purposes for which spacious buildings are raised; and by the glimpses of them permitted on special occasions, not less than by their concealments, they were made to diffuse a religious fear over the mind of the multitude. Rude stones, dispersed in the form of avenues and circles, some of them adjusted in the cromlech shape, others so placed as to be altar-stones, were the only approaches towards architecture to be seen in these sacred inclosures. The stones so disposed were sometimes all but unhewn, as in the once

* Cæsar, *de Bel. Gal.* vi. 13. Mela, iii. 2. Pliny, xxx. 1. Diod. Sic. lib. v. c. 31. Amm. Mar. xv. 427. Cicero, *de Div.* i. 41.

famous temple at Abury in Wiltshire. At other times they are reduced into shape by the tool of the workman, and raised into artificial structures by mechanical skill, as at Stonehenge. In the figures described by them there was no doubt a mystic significance, but on this subject our moderns have speculated to little purpose. We should add, that the cause which made the Druid worship to be a worship without temples, made it to be a worship without images. In the history of barbarous nations, the rudest conceivable sculpture has sufficed to connect polytheism with idolatry. But the Druids were intelligent enough to see that their object would not be served by the aids of this nature within their reach. Their instinct appears to have taught them that, in regard to such objects, remoteness and invisibility are better sources of impression.* BOOK I. CHAP. 4.

It must be confessed that in these aspects of Druidism there is something elevated and impressive, if compared with the systems which have obtained among many nations in the same stage of their history. The ceremonies, too, of the Druid worship, were not without their picturesque features. Their festivals were frequent, and celebrated with music and dancing, and choral hymns in honour of their divinities. In the month of August the grand ceremonial of cutting the misletoe from the oak took place. The chief Druid ascended the tree clothed in white, and severed the branch with a golden knife. Priests stood below with a large white linen cloth open to receive the branch as it fell. Two white bulls, fastened by their horns to the sacred tree, were then offered in sacrifice, and great rejoicings and feastings followed.† Druidic ritual.

But the ritual of the Druids was not on all occa-

* Gen. xxxi. Tacit. *de Mor. German.* ix. *Mona Antiqua*, vii.–ix. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xvi. 44. Maxim. *Tyr. Diss.* xxxviii. Lucan, iii. 412.

† Plin. *Nat. Hist.* xvi. 44. Poland's *Hist. Druids*, 69–74.

sions of this comparatively harmless description. Their sacrifices rose in value with their sense of danger. Hence, in times of great public exigency, even human victims were offered, and these in great numbers. We have all seen in imagination that colossal image of wickerwork, resembling the figure of a man, which was sometimes set up by them, the interior filled with human beings, that the whole might be consumed to ashes amidst the noise of instruments and shoutings, much in the manner of the suttee ceremonial only of late abolished in India.*

Special repugnance of Druidism to the object of the Romans.

It is easy to see that the points of antagonism would be strong between such a system and the kind of rule contemplated by the Romans. It was inevitable that the success of the Roman power should prove fatal to that of the Druids. So long as the two existed together, the people were in the condition of being required to serve two masters. The priests of most other countries, with more limited pretensions, might be tolerated, but here there could be no compromise. As we have seen, the Druid was not only a priest. He may be said to have made the law, and he administered it; and the foe with whom he now had to deal could know nothing of such authorities in other hands than its own. No doubt, the occasional cruelties of the Druid worship contributed, along with these causes, to the destruction of the order.

The fact that the Romans suppressed the religion of the natives—suppressed it with violence and bloodshed—would not dispose the Briton to look with favour on the religion of that people. We do not find, accordingly, that the gods of Rome ever became naturalized in this country. This might have happened if scepticism in regard to the claims of those

* Cæsar, *de Bel. Gal.* vi. 16. Diodorus (lib. v. c. 31) and Strabo (lib. iv. c. 4) both speak of the Druids as sometimes striking the man devoted to sacrifice with their weapons, and as affecting to see future events in the throes of their victim.

gods had been less prevalent among their professed worshippers, and if the Roman ascendency in Britain had been more genial. The event shows, that the power which annihilated Druidism was to give Britain Christianity, and not another paganism. Not that anything of that nature was intended. But it was inevitable that the Roman roads should become lines of communication, facilitating the travel of all sorts of people, and of all sorts of news, from the most distant parts of the empire. So the way was opened for the entrance of the Christian faith.

Introduction of Christianity.

The pride of ancestry, rarely wanting in individuals, exists invariably in communities. Nations which have not been able to discover a satisfactory origin for themselves, have spared no pains to invent one. Their beginnings as a people, and the beginnings of everything characteristic and honourable in their history, have been to them themes of interest on which they have bestowed no little embellishment.

It would be pleasant to be able to assign the introduction of Christianity into Britain to some very definite and very creditable source. But this Providence has not permitted. On this subject we possess abundance of fable, beneath which it is often difficult to find the true residuum of history.

The blow struck at the Druid power in Mona by Suetonius was decisive. The prophecies of that proud order had then come to nothing. The Britons had not prevailed. The gods in whom they trusted had not shielded them. The Druids had perished on their own altars. Their enemies had desecrated and destroyed their most sacred retreats. In these facts were the seeds of change.

Fictions and misconceptions concerning the introduction of Christianity.

The ground was thus prepared, but by what hand was the next seed sown? The first preaching of the Gospel in Britain has been ascribed to St. James, to Simon Zelotes, to Joseph of Arimathea, and to the Aristobulus mentioned by St. Paul. But all these narratives may be taken simply as so much illustra-

tion of that credulity, and love of fable, which distinguished the writers of the Middle Age, especially the monks.*

Story of Pomponia Græcina.

It has been maintained by some that Pomponia Græcina, the wife of Aulus Plautius, who was governor of Britain from A.D. 43 to A.D. 47, was a Christian. The facts which are supposed to warrant this opinion are the following. In Rome, in A.D. 56, Pomponia was charged with having embraced some 'foreign superstition;' on that charge she was tried in the presence of her husband and was acquitted; and subsequently, when a lady whom she tenderly loved had been treacherously put to death, she had a continual sorrow, and would never cease to wear mourning.† It will be seen that these facts furnish no evidence that Pomponia, the wife of Aulus Plautius in Rome in A.D. 56, had been his wife, and been with him in Britain in A.D. 45; nor any evidence that the foreign superstition which she was said to have embraced was Christianity. Her acquittal, and her continual sorrow, are evidence rather of a contrary nature. Had she been a Christian, she would hardly have failed to confess herself such; and it was not the manner of Christians in those days to sorrow as those who have no hope.

Of Claudia.

An attempt has been made to identify Pudens, a friend of Martial the poet, and Claudia, a British lady whom he married, with the Pudens and Claudia mentioned by St. Paul in his second letter to Timothy. But the mention of Pudens and Claudia by Paul is in A.D. 67; and the marriage of the Pudens and Claudia known to Martial, and who are described as then in the flower of their age, did not take place until twelve, it may be twenty, years later. In addi-

* Stillingfleet, *Originæs Britannicæ*. Ussher, *Britannicarum Ecclesiarum Antiquitates*. Henry, *Hist. Eng.* book i. c. 2.

† Tacit. *Annal.* xiii.

tion to which, the Pudens and Claudia whose marriage the poet celebrates, were persons expected to be pleased with his invoking all the heathen divinities to be present with their usual benedictions on the occasion; and the bridegroom at least is well known to have been a person not likely to be found cultivating the friendship either of an aged Christian apostle, or of a young Christian evangelist.*

The only other names associated with the supposed introduction of Christianity into Britain entitled to notice, are those of St. Paul and King Lucius.

Conjectures in relation to St. Paul.

In support of the claim of St. Paul, it is alleged that Venantius Fortunatus, a Bishop of Gaul, and Sempronius, a Patriarch of Jerusalem, have both stated explicitly that this apostle preached the Gospel in Britain. But it is to be remembered that Fortunatus writes as a poet in the sixth century; that the language of Sempronius is cited from a panegyric on the apostle delivered in the seventh century. Testimony coming so late, and from such sources, can be of no real value. But it is added that many other writers, some of them living two centuries earlier, assert that St. Paul preached the Gospel in the 'western parts'—an expression which was often used as comprehending Britain. Such expressions, however, were often used as *not* comprehending Britain, or any territory near it. This testimony, accordingly, is too vague to be of any weight. It is further urged that there was an interval between the first imprisonment of St. Paul in Rome, and his second imprisonment, in which he *might* have extended his labours to Britain, and in which it is probable he did, inasmuch as we do not find him conspicuously occupied during that period elsewhere. Here, again, it is to be remembered, that the release of the apostle from his first imprison-

* Martial, lib. xi. ep. 13, 54. 2 Tim. iv. 21. Martial, it seems, was a man who could cast ridicule on the sufferings of the Christians.—Paley's *Evid.* part i. c. 2.

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ment in Rome, appears to have taken place in A.D. 63 or 64, and his second commitment was in A.D. 67. But in A.D. 67 he wrote his second letter to Timothy; and he there speaks of his having recently been at Troas, at Corinth, and at Miletum; and of his having been occupied about affairs in Thessalonica, in Dalmatia, in Galatia, in Ephesus, and in Asia generally. It is scarcely too much to say, therefore, that it was not possible that the apostle should have made a journey to Britain in the interval between his first and second imprisonment —and, of course, to prove the *possibility* in this case, would be by no means to prove the *fact*. Nor does it accord with our conception of a man who had a right to speak of himself as Paul the aged, to suppose that he added to all the occupations above indicated, in the short space of three or four years, the great labour that must have been incurred even to have made a hasty visit to this remote island.*

Legend of King Lucius.

Concerning the story of King Lucius, the statement of Bede is, that he was 'King of Britain;' that in the year A.D. 156 he sent a letter to Eleutherius, Bishop of Rome, praying that by his authority he might be allowed to profess himself a Christian; and that this pious wish being complied with, Christianity retained its footing in this island from that time.† Nennius, Abbot of Bangor, who is supposed to have written about the close of the seventh century, says that, in 'A.D. 167, King Lucius, with all the British chiefs, re-'ceived baptism from the hands of messengers sent by 'the Roman emperors, and by Pope Evaristus.'‡ It would require large space to point out the strange confusions in history and chronology included in these brief statements. Whence Bede or Nennius obtained their information we know not. But here we have

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* Stillingfleet, *Antiquities.* Cave's *Lives of the Apost.* ii. 290. 1 Tim. i. 3; 2 Tim. iv.; Tit. i. 5; iii. 12; Acts xiv. xv. xviii. xix.

† Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* lib. i. c. iv.

‡ *Hist. Brit.* c. 18.

Lucius as 'King of Britain,' leading 'all the British 'chiefs' to baptism, at a time when the Romans had long since dispensed with the services of kings in this island, and when, if the very race had not ceased to exist, their being permitted to reign had come to an end. Here, too, we find the emperors of Rome taking upon them, in A.D. 167, to patronize Christianity, and, in conjunction with the Bishop, or rather the 'Pope' of Rome, sending forth legations of Christian priests to accomplish the work of conversion among heathen men at the outposts of their empire! That Pope Evaristus might be the favoured instrument in this memorable proceeding, it is contrived by Nennius that a man who had died in A.D. 109 should be alive in A.D. 167. Bede, on the other hand, that he might assign this honour to Pope Eleutherius, makes that ecclesiastic to have been Bishop of Rome when he had still many years to serve in offices more humble. Gildas, our oldest British authority on British history, was a monk of Bangor, and lived in the middle of the sixth century; but it is manifest, that of this marvellous story about King Lucius, Gildas knew nothing, nor of any story resembling it. Eusebius, the careful chronicler of all such events, is in like manner silent. The fact is, that between the age of Gildas and Nennius, it had come to be regarded as a matter of importance that the clergy of the British churches, who had sought refuge in Wales, should be able to make out as good a claim to a Roman and apostolic origin as the clergy who had been sent by Pope Gregory to convert the Anglo-Saxons; and this tale concerning Lucius appears to have been the fabrication of some British ecclesiastic, intended to meet this exigency, and to put the clergy of Wales upon as honourable a footing as their neighbours. In an age so little critical on matters of history, this was not a difficult work to accomplish.*

* The credulity even of such men as Ussher and Stillingfleet, in regard to the fictions which have obtained currency touching the introduction of

BOOK I. CHAP. 4.

The probability as to the introduction of Christianity into Britain.

But the question may still be asked—are we, then, left without any knowledge as to when or how Christianity first became known in this island? Our answer to this question is, that we may imagine the probable, where we cannot attain to the certain. The known may be sufficient to warrant highly reasonable conjecture as to the unknown. We know that communication between Britain and the Continent became regular and settled in the apostolic age. We know also that before that age had closed, Suetonius had destroyed the power of the Druids. Through more than two centuries from that time Britain was in a state of comparative tranquillity. The legions and auxiliaries transported to this country often consisted of men who had been long resident in Gaul, and in other parts of the empire, where, before the end of the first century, Christianity had been widely propagated. Trade intercourse with this country increased rapidly, and brought with it the usual interchanges of thought. Christians in those days, moreover, were zealous in an extraordinary degree — as Pliny's letters to Trajan abundantly show — in endeavours to diffuse their doctrine. The Christian soldier made it a matter of daily talk with his comrades. The Christian merchant found occasion for discourse upon it amidst his buying and selling. The rich Christian taught it to his slave, and the Christian slave dared to speak of it to his master. Every Christian had his mission. His sacramental pledge had been, not only to hold the truth unto the death, but to endeavour by all available means to make it known to others. It is probable that the public teaching of Christianity was little known until these more obscure but earnest efforts had sufficed to

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Christianity into this country, is not a little surprising. The evidence which Ussher would have adduced from an ancient coin, said to bear the sign of a cross, and to have the name of Lucius indicated in the letters L. U. C., has been shown by Mr. Hallam to be altogether fallacious. See the paper on this whole story in the *Archeologia*, xxxiii. 208 *et seq.*

bring very many to profess themselves Christians. Having resolved to annihilate Druidism, the concern of the Roman would naturally be that his own religion should come into its place. Hence any conspicuous mode of attempting to make proselytes to a new and unrecognised faith would be viewed with suspicion and discouraged. The first converts would probably be made in the colonies and towns, but the more open exercise of worship would take place in districts less subject to the eye of authority. It is to the jealousy of this authority that we are indebted for our earliest authentic information concerning the Christian religion in Britain.

Persecution of British Christians under Diocletian.

Towards the close of the reign of Diocletian the obscurity in which the professors of the Gospel in Britain appear to have been content to remain was to continue no longer. The persecution which had dragged such men into fame in other provinces, for some years past, now began to do its work in this island. It is not probable that Constantius, who had recently put an end to the usurpation of Carausius and Alectus in Britain, was a party to these proceedings. The blame rests, we have reason to think, on some subordinate who was disposed to gratify his love of rule by availing himself of the imperial edicts against the Christians — mandates which had been disregarded under the late usurped authority. The account given by Bede is, that a man named Alban, residing at Verulam, sheltered a Christian priest from the search of his persecutors, and that, being won by the holy demeanour of his guest, Alban became himself a Christian. So that, when soldiers came to demand that the priest should be delivered into their hands, Alban presented himself in the place of the man whom he had concealed, declaring himself a Christian. Of the miracles which gave their splendour to his martyrdom we need say nothing. But that there was a martyr at Verulam of the name of Alban, who was afterwards canonized, and from whom the

town of St. Albans derives its name, may be accepted as history. Bede relates, moreover, that many more, of both sexes, and in other places, suffered in like manner, and makes special mention of 'Aaron and Julius,' citizens of the 'Urbs Legionum'—that is, of Caerleon on the Usk—as having shown themselves faithful unto death.*

Gildas, Orosius, and Bede all relate that this persecution having come to an end on the accession of Constantius, the father of Constantine the Great, the persecuted in Britain left their hiding-places in 'the 'woods and deserts, and secret caves; rebuilt the 'churches which had been levelled to the ground, 'and raised many new edifices in honour of the 'martyrs.'† These descriptions seem to imply that before the close of the reign of Diocletian the Christians in Britain must have been numerous, and have been possessed of considerable substance.

British bishops in the Council of Arles.

Nine years after the close of the Diocletian persecution, Constantine assembled the council of Arles, in which five ecclesiastics are reported as present from Britain—three under the title of bishops, the fourth as a priest, the fifth as a deacon. The first bishop was from York, the second from London, and the third probably from Lincoln. The whole number of bishops present from the western provinces, including Africa, was thirty-three. It is clear, therefore, that in the early part of the fourth century the worship and organization of the Christian communities in Britain had become so well known and settled, as to secure them a recognised place in the great Christian commonwealth of those times. We may presume that the acts of the council of Arles were received as law by the Christians of Britain in the fourth century. The members of that council showed themselves careful to ensure that the men who ministered in holy things should be men of a blameless life, and that the pri-

* Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* lib. i. c. 6. 7. † Ibid. lib. i. c. 8.

vileges of the Christian fellowship should be restricted to persons whose lives were distinguished by Christian conduct, and by fidelity to their profession. No bishop was to obtrude in the province of another bishop; no bishop was to be ordained without the presence and concurrence of seven other bishops; clergymen were not to be usurers, nor to be wanderers from place to place, but to be resident in the place in which they were ordained. Deacons were not to administer the eucharist. Among the persons to be suspended or excluded from communion were females who had married heathen husbands, charioteers in public games, actors in theatres, or clergymen who had betrayed their brethren, or delivered up the sacred books and sacred things of the Church into profane hands in the times of persecution. No person who had once been baptised in the name of the Trinity was to be rebaptised. No person excommunicated by one church was to be received by another.*

Orthodoxy of the British Church.

The Arian controversy began about A.D. 317. Eight years later it led to the assembling of the memorable council of Nice. Some of the Britons are said to have taken the heterodox side in this dispute. But if the infection existed, it must have been very partial and temporary. Athanasius, Jerome, and Chrysostom, all proclaim the Britons as faithful to the Nicene doctrine. The loose expressions of Gildas and Bede on this point must be judged in connexion with such facts.†

British monachism—Pelagius and Celestius.

Monasticism obtained root in Britain in the fourth century. And if the speculations of Pelagius, a monk of Bangor, might be taken as a sample of the intelligence of his order, we should be disposed to think favourably of the mental training to be realized in the monasteries of Britain in those days. Pelagius was a man of pure life, of considerable learning, of some

* Labbe, *Concil.* ed. Harduin. i.

† Stillingfleet, *Antiquities*, 175.

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ethical acuteness, and well acquainted with the leading ecclesiastics of his time, and with the affairs of the Church generally. Nor is there any room to doubt his sincere piety. His great antagonist Augustine, champion of orthodoxy as he was, is magnanimous enough to say of him, 'I not only loved him once, I 'love him still.' His errors are all of the kind most common in the history of opinion—the errors of reaction. Scandalized by the evils he saw resulting from a false dependence on ritualism, and on priestly service in the sacraments, and not less by the covert excuse for sin which had become prevalent among the orthodox under the plea of the moral inability of man, Pelagius laboured to give prominence to the moral and spiritual side of the Christian life, as embracing a department of truth and duty which the Church was in danger of forgetting or neglecting. But his halting-place was not the right one. Pressed by opponents, he learnt to deny that there is any inherent bias towards evil in man. Every man, he taught, has power from himself to obey the law of God; and his salvation depends on the purity of his life, not on anything speculative or outward. In Christianity, as presented in the Scriptures, there is a transcendent teaching, and through it a divine influence comes to aid man in all moral and spiritual effort. This is the substance and mission of the Gospel. It does not, he maintained, bring redemption or salvation in the sense commonly understood. In Celestius, a brother monk, who was also a native of Britain, Pelagius found a coadjutor, his equal in zeal, his superior, it is said, in the subtlety of his reasoning. By their joint labours a controversy was raised which agitated both the East and West for some time.

Preaching of Lupus and Germanus in Britain.

It does not appear that either Pelagius or Celestius ever visited this island after the publication of their opinions had made them notorious. Bede, however, relates that in A.D. 429, the Pelagian doctrine had been so far embraced in Britain, that the native clergy

became alarmed, and solicited help from their more skilful brethren in Gaul, whence the new doctrine had come to them. As the result, a number of the Gallic clergy came to Britain, with the bishops Lupus and Germanus at their head; and these holy men, it is said, having filled the land with the fame of their miracles, so confuted the heretics, in the presence of great multitudes of people, that they were brought to confess their errors.*

Summary of the revolution in religion.

These events belong to the early part of the fifth century. By that time the natives of Britain may be said, we think, to have abandoned their heathenism. Much of its influence no doubt survived, but the new faith had become ascendant. Great was the revolution in ideas, in dispositions, and in usages which this change involved. The Christianity professed may not have been of the most enlightened description; but it gave to the people of this country their first true conception of the Infinite, and it raised their thoughts to Him as to their Father through Christ. Humanity in Christ was before them as presenting the great *manifestation* of the *Divine*, the great *pattern* of the *Human*. Time was to develop the germ of intellectual and spiritual change included in this fact. With this new object of worship came new views of human duty and of human destiny. The reign of horrors, so often shadowed forth in the rites of the Druid grove, was succeeded by the calm and benign influence of a Christian worship; and this new apprehension of the Great Parent of humanity was inseparable from a new apprehension of humanity itself. It is thus that religious enlightenment comes to be one of the surest guarantees for enlightenment in regard to all feeling and all action. This revolution in religion, long advancing in secret, became visible and consolidated in the fifth century. The new faith bid fair to leaven the entire mind of the country. Its effect on that portion of

* *Eccles. Hist.* i. c. vii.

the British race which was to survive the approaching troubles was deep and permanent. The Britons are no more known in history as pagans. Those of them who are found in the fastnesses of Wales after the departure of the Romans, and after the invasion of the Saxons, are Christian Britons, with a Christian hierarchy, a Christian literature, and a Christian civilization sufficiently strong to eradicate whatever remains of their old faith or usage may still have been left with them. All these acquisitions they must have carried with them into their mountain homes. There was no channel of communication through which they could have received them afterwards. We have seen, however, that it is much easier to show that these aborigines of Britain did really become Christians in those early times, than to say exactly when, or by what means, this revolution was brought to pass.

CHAPTER V.

EFFECT OF THE ROMAN ASCENDENCY ON SOCIAL LIFE.

Agriculture among the Britons.

AMONG the industrial arts, that of procuring the means of subsistence is manifestly one of the most necessary and primitive. Barbarous tribes obtain their food, in a great degree, by hunting, fishing, and by expedients to ensnare animals. In the time of Cæsar, the rudest inhabitants of Britain would seem to have passed considerably beyond that stage. Those who did not till the ground reared abundance of cattle. Many, especially in the country bordering on the southern coast, cultivated their lands with manure and with the plough, and were wont to supply themselves with corn and other products by such means.*

It was the manner of the Romans to encourage agriculture in every country that became subject to their sway. The rich products of the East were soon naturalized to a large extent in the less favoured climate of the West. The vine, the olive, and many luscious fruits, such as the apricot, the peach, and the orange, passed from Italy into Spain and Gaul. Britain shared largely in these influences. The veterans who founded colonies became zealous cultivators of the lands which fell to their share, and taught the Britons, both directly and indirectly, to excel in such labours.† In the fourth century the corn produced in this island was conveyed in large quantities to other provinces of the empire, especially to Gaul and Germany. Upon an emergency, in A.D. 359, more than

* Cæsar, *de Bel. Gal.* v. 10–12.

† *Scriptores Rei Rusticæ a Gesnero*, tom. i.

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eight hundred vessels were employed in carrying grain from Britain to the Rhine.* Nor was it in the field only that the skill and industry of the British husbandman became visible. His vines, his trees bearing pleasant fruits, and his gardens generally, bore witness to the facility with which he could learn what his conquerors were prepared to teach.† Indeed, there is good reason to suppose that our agriculture was in a more prosperous state under the Romans, than at any subsequent period in our history during the next thousand years.

How the Britons were clothed.

Next to the need of food man feels the need of clothing. In the time of Cæsar, many of the inland tribes of Britain had probably little better clothing than the skins of animals, their bodies being in great part naked. But we are not obliged to conclude that those skins were not prepared with some skill for their use; and we have seen, that some centuries earlier, there were Britons known to the Phœnicians who wore garments of cloth.‡ At the commencement of the Christian era the Gauls produced woollen cloths of various textures, and could dye them of various colours. The manufacture of linen is an advance beyond the manufacture of woollen; and this knowledge was familiar at that time to the Gauls. Scarcely anything of this nature could have been known in Gaul, and have been unknown to the Belgic settlers in Britain.§ The costume of Boadicea is described as rich and queenly, and that of the men and women of distinction about her would bear some resemblance to it.‖ Ancient

* Ammianus Marcel. lib. xviii. c. 2. Zosimus, *Hist.* lib. iii. c. 5.

† *Script. Hist. August.* 942. Tacitus, *Vita Agric.* xii.

‡ Cæsar, *de Bel. Gal.* v. 14. Pomponius Mela, iii. c. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xiii. 11. Strabo, lib. iii. c. v. § 11.

§ 'The Gauls wear the sagum, let their hair grow, and wear short breeches. Instead of tunics, they wear a slashed garment with sleeves, descending a little below the hips. The wool of their sheep is coarse, but long: from it they weave the thick saga called laines.'—Strabo, lib. iv. c. iv. § 3. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* lib. viii. c. 48, xxii. c. 2. Diodorus.

‖ Xiphilin. *in Nero.*

writers often speak of the Gauls and Britons as one people in regard to all such exercises of skill. Pliny describes the simple process by which the people of both countries managed to bleach their linens.*

Useful arts—Ornament.

The accounts which ancient writers have given of the ancient war-chariot, show that the useful arts must have been in an advanced state in Britain before the first Roman invasion. All these writers concur in praising the skill, and even the elegance, displayed in the construction and management of these machines. It is clear, from what we know of the war-chariot, that there must have been Britons at that time who were good smiths, carpenters, and wheelwrights. Such men would be capable of building houses, and of producing furniture, after a manner unknown among nations in the lower state of barbarism. The scythes fastened to the axle of the chariot, and the weapons used by the warrior, bespeak considerable proficiency in the working of metals.† Then there was the harness, which, rude as it may have been, must have been adapted to its purpose by many arts that would have their value in many processes besides that of harness-making. We have abundance of evidence that the Britons of both sexes were disposed to a profuse use of ornament in dress. Gold was worn about the wrists and arms, and on the breast. The *torc*—a twisted collar for the neck—was often of that precious metal. During more than two thousand years that ornament is known to have been in use among the Celts. The *torc* was a symbol of rank, and the numbers of them taken from the Gauls were often among the richest spoils of the Romans in their wars with that people. They are mentioned as among the trophies in the procession in which Caractacus made his

* *Nat. Hist.* xix. c. 1; xx. c. 19; xxviii. c. 12.

† The Gauls do not appear to have used the chariot in war. Some critics have come to doubt whether the British war-chariot was really scythed. But the evidence in favour of the common opinion on that point is not, I think, to be set aside.

appearance.* Many of the trinkets found in the burial-places of the pagan Britons are of inferior substance. They are found in bronze, in amber, and in glass; but those of more costly substance were in use. Many of these articles were no doubt imported, but many were native productions, and evinced the native skill. The comforts of home-life—the homestead, the furniture, and the food, could hardly have been obtained from a distance.

Causes unfavourable to civilization in ancient Britain.

There were, however, many causes which precluded the Britons before the age of Cæsar from making all the provision for their wants in this respect which they might have made. Britain in those early times was parcelled out between many separate communities, who were almost perpetually at war with each other; and the buildings of to-day were too often reared with the feeling that destruction might come upon them to-morrow. Cæsar and Strabo indeed tell us that the Britons gave the name of a city to a collection of rude huts enclosed by a mound or stockade.† In the Britain which Cæsar saw, the places of security were no doubt much of that description. But the strongest earthworks of the Britons, even in those days, were not in forests, but on high lands, wherever such lands were available. Many of the positions thus chosen by them were afterwards occupied as beacon and military stations by the Romans, though the Roman encampment was required to be square, while the British works were always circular. This latter form, in many of the earthworks which remain over a large portion of the island to this day, demonstrates their early British origin, occupied and disturbed as they

British earthworks.

* Titus Manlius, as we have all read, was named Torquatus, from the *torc* which he tore from the neck of a gigantic Gaul. Aneurin, the great Welsh bard, who wrote in the sixth century, laments the loss of several 'golden torcked sons' in the memorable battle of Cattraeth. Some three hundred Britons who wore that mark of rank are said to have fallen on that day.

† Strabo, lib. iv. Rowland's *Mona*, 38, 39. Cæsar, *de Bel. Gal.* iv. 12.

have often been since, not only by the Romans, but by Saxons and Danes. Of such works Cæsar saw nothing. The Malvern Hills, Little Doward, Bassechurch, and Silchester are among the localities remarkable for British works of this description. In the last-mentioned place there have been the traces of a town regularly mapped out, and enclosed with stone walls, which should be attributed, we think, on various grounds, to British skill before the invasion under Claudius. It should be remembered that the life of the Britons even to the time of this second invasion, continued to be to a large extent a herdsman's life; and that these fortified places were not so much places of residence, as places of safety for themselves and their flocks in time of danger. Cæsar himself speaks of the houses he saw in Britain as resembling those in Gaul. Now Gaul was not a country of wigwams. It contained cities of considerable strength and beauty. Before the close of the first century, when the Romans had still their conquest to achieve in this country, London, as we have seen, had become a place of great traffic, and of many thousand inhabitants. Early in the second century, Ptolemy makes mention of nearly sixty cities then existing in Britain. Some of these cities the Romans had created, but much the greater number consisted of Roman settlements fixed on British roads, and grafted on British towns. Exeter, for example, had been the capital—the place of general gathering, for the people of that part of Britain from the earliest time. It was thus almost everywhere. The old sites became the home of the new masters. In the interior and remote districts, the dwelling-places of our ancestors at the time of the first Roman invasion, were no doubt for the most part of a very humble description. They were generally circular in form, constructed of wood, the spaces between the framework being filled up with mortar of clay, the covering being of reeds or thatch. The roof was of a cone shape, with an opening at the summit to

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admit light, and to give egress to the smoke, the interior presenting a rounded apartment with its fire on ıe earth in the centre. Wretched as such hovels ıay be deemed, large portions of the subjects of great ıonarchies in modern Europe have been hardly better oused. Such erections as Stonehenge, though reared y Druids, evince a knowledge of mechanics which annot be supposed to exist apart from much useful nowledge beside. The whole track of the Celtic ribes, in their migration from the east to the west, is ıarked by such monuments. The works of this ature at Abury in Wiltshire are of greater extent han those of Stonehenge, and those of the temple of 'arnac in Gaul were greater still.* The aptness of

* The following passages descriptive of the character and manners of ıe Gauls in the age of Cæsar are no doubt applicable substantially ı the Britons at that time: 'The entire race which now goes by the ame of Gallic, or Galatic (Gauls), is warlike, passionate, and always ady for fighting, but otherwise simple, and not malicious. If irritated, ıey rush in crowds to the conflict, openly and without any circumspec- on, and thus are easily vanquished by those who employ stratagem. or any one may exasperate them when, where, and under whatever pre- ext he pleases: he will always find them ready for danger, with nothing ı support them except their violence and daring. Nevertheless, they ıay be easily persuaded to devote themselves to anything useful, and have ıus engaged both in science and letters. The most valiant of them vell towards the north and next the ocean. Of these they say the *Belgæ* e the bravest, and have sustained themselves single-handed against the ermans, the Cimbri, and the Teutons—their equipment is in keeping ith the size of their bodies. They have a long sword hanging at their ght side, a long shield, and lances in proportion; together with a maclaris, mewhat resembling a javelin. Some of them also use bows and slings; ıey have also a piece of wood resembling a pilum, which they hurl, not ut of a thong, but from their hand, and to a farther distance than an rrow. They principally make use of it in shooting birds. To the pre- ent day most of them lie on the ground, and take their meals seated on raw. They subsist principally on milk and on all kinds of flesh, espe- ally that of swine, which they eat fresh and salted. Their swine live in ıe fields, and surpass in height, strength, and swiftness. To persons naccustomed to approach them they are almost as dangerous as wolves. he people dwell in great arched houses, constructed of planks and wicker, nd covered with a heavy thatched roof. They have sheep and swine in uch abundance, that they supply sagæ and salted pork, in plenty, not nly to Rome, but to most parts of Italy. Their governments were for

the Britons to learn whatever Gaul, or Rome itself, could teach, is amply attested by Tacitus, whose information must have come from the best authority—from the great Agricola.*

Roman civilization introduced.

But the settlement of the Romans, of course introduced both the useful arts and the embellishments of life, in the maturity which had then been given to them among the most civilized nations. The fraternities and corporations of weavers, and of other crafts, which were protected and patronized by the Roman State, soon made their appearance in this country, as in the other provinces of the empire, and the artisans in Rome produced few articles of utility or luxury that were not also produced in Britain. Winchester was to the people of those times very much what Leeds and Manchester have since become to ourselves.†

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the most part aristocratic. Formerly they chose a governor every year, and a military leader was always selected by the multitude. To their simplicity and vehemence the Gauls join much folly, arrogance, and love of ornament. They wear golden collars round their necks, and bracelets on their arms and wrists, and those who are of any dignity have garments dyed, and worked with gold. This lightness of character makes them intolerable when they conquer, and throws them into consternation when worsted.'—Strabo, book iv. c. 4. Among the Britons, as we have seen, monarchy or chieftainshp was hereditary, but in nearly all other respects the Belgæ and the Cantii were the same people.

* *Vita Agric.* xxi. Gough's *Camden*, i. 141. *Archæologia*, xv. 184. Horsley's *Britannia Romana*. Akerman's *Archæological Index*, 44, 45. There are many remains of British earthworks in Oxfordshire, and more in Dorset. *Cyclops Christianus*. In the learned work with this title, Mr. Herbert attempts to show that the stone structures above mentioned are the work of Christian Britons after the departure of the Romans. But his case is by no means made out.

† In all the Roman cities there were incorporations of operatives and artificers, answering very much to the trade guilds familiar to us in the later times of British history; but these incorporations were known in law by the name of 'colleges.' These associations were intimately connected with religion, included a principle of caste, and have been variously described as fraternities and republics. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that they should have been at times prohibited as politically dangerous.—Palgrave, c. x. 331–335. See Horsley's *Brit. Rom.* 337–342, for evidence showing that colleges of this description were early introduced into Roman Britain. Du Cange, *Gloss. voce* 'Gynæcium.' *Cod. Theod.* iii. lib. x. tit. 20.

Pottery.

With this new taste and skill in so many things, would come new taste in matters of furniture and ornament. The useful and the elegant in pottery were produced in great quantities in many parts of this island. Large traces of this branch of industry, dating from the time of the Romans, have been discovered in Kent, Northamptonshire, and elsewhere. The terra cotta produced by the same artists, was also in a beautiful style of workmanship. From the abundance of such remains on the sites of all the Roman stations, and from other evidence, it is clear that the use of pottery was much more common among the Romans than it is among us. It is no longer to be doubted that ornaments from jet, or what is now called cannel coal, were produced in Roman Britain, and that our ancestors were familiar thus early with much skilful workmanship in glass.

Mines—coal—metals.

We find also that the Romans were by no means ignorant of the mineral treasures to be found in Britain. They burnt coals on the banks of the Tyne and elsewhere in those old days. They amassed large wealth by working mines for iron, and lead, and tin, and copper; and false hopes were sometimes raised by their coming upon a vein of silver, and even upon gold. Their principal iron works were in the forest of Dean; and in the forest of Anderida, now the Weald country of Sussex and Kent. The Roman coins often found in the scoriæ of these deserted works, as well as the abundance of Roman pottery, determine the date and origin of such works.

Roman roads.

The Roman citizen disposed to make himself acquainted with the island of Britain towards the close of the third century, would of course consult some Itinerary setting forth its principal towns and roads. Our modern railway-map gives us something very like the chart that would be placed before him. The trunk lines of our new iron roads go to a great extent along the track of the old military routes in Roman Britain. The cities and towns which form

the termini of our main lines now, were most of them existing as terminating points then, and their names are only slightly, if at all changed. It is true the Romans generally constructed their roads in direct lines, crossing alike the hill and the valley. Where such inequalities occur we now do our best to desert the old pathways. But the greater part of England is comparatively level ground. The road from Dover to London passed through Canterbury and Rochester in those days as in later days. To leave London through the line of street now known as Bishopsgate, was to enter upon a road which sent off its branches to the Humber and the Tyne, the Mersey and the Solway. Leaving London by the outlet now known as Ludgate, a smooth and safe road would be found open into Devonshire or South Wales, stretching from Gloucester to Shrewsbury, and striking off to St. George's Channel. Between these main lines were many branch lines, covering the whole land with a busy network of communication, connecting the greater cities with the population of the smaller towns and villages. Many of these roads passed through the dense forest, bordered on the stagnant marsh, pursued their arrow-like course across the desolate moorland, or opened to the wayfarer the sight of blue hills and rich valleys, full of beauty, and of the signs of industry, wealth, and civilization. At short intervals along these roads, as on the banks of so many rivers, Roman stations made their appearance, with villas, and buildings of every description, clustered about them.*

Educated life in Roman Britain.

But the Roman villa supposes an advance in art beyond the barely useful. The humblest form of handicraft implies a measure of education and of mental development. But the social life of the

* Horsley's *Britannia Romana*, book iii. *Journal of the Archæological Association*, i. 1–9; ii. 42, 86, 164–169, 324, 339, 349. Wellbeloved's *York under the Romans*. Whitaker's *Manchester*. Moule's *Essay on Roman Villas*.

Romans embraced that intellectual life which results from the direct and indirect influence of science, letters, and general taste. To what extent were the Britons found capable of appreciating such refinements?

Close of Druid influence.

The Druids of Gaul and Britain, according to the testimony of nearly all our earlier authorities in relation to them, were men who owed their position to their science and learning, even more than to their office as priests. They are described as being profound students in physiology, botany, medicine, and surgery; in arithmetic, geometry, mechanics, and astronomy. They are even said to have excelled in geography. In these descriptions there is no doubt much exaggeration. But it is certain that the Druids affected to be in possession of extraordinary knowledge on all these subjects; and that whatever they knew was mixed up with pretensions to supernatural powers, and made to subserve their priestly rule. Their knowledge, besides being thus misapplied, and of necessity limited, and mixed with much error, was always the knowledge of a separate order of men, if not of a caste. It came to the people, in consequence, only indirectly, and rarely as a real advantage. So that when the Romans swept away the Druids, and took the natives under their own guidance, they had to commence the education of their new allies, as regarded any knowledge of letters, from the beginning.*

The fine arts—and general culture.

Tacitus describes the course given to the occupations and tastes of the Britons towards the close of the first century. To wean them from tendencies that were ever disposing them to acts of insubordination 'Agricola held forth the baits of pleasure, 'encouraging them, as well by public assistance as by 'warm exhortations, to build temples, courts of justice,

* Strabo, lib. ii. 138; iv. 181, 197. Diod. Sic. ii. 47; v. 31; xii. 36. Mela, iii. 2, 12. Ammian. Marcel. xv. 9. Cæsar, *de Bel. Gal.* vi. 13, 14. Brucker, *Hist. Philos.* i. 314–316. Rowland's *Mona*, 84.

'and commodious dwelling-houses. He bestowed encomiums on such as cheerfully obeyed: the slow and uncomplying were branded with reproach; and thus a spirit of emulation diffused itself, operating like a sense of duty. To establish a plan of education, and to give the sons of the leading chiefs a tincture of letters, was part of his policy. By way of encouragement he praised their talents, and already saw them, by the force of their native genius, rising superior to the attainments of the Gauls. The consequence was that they who had always disdained the Roman language began to cultivate its beauties.'*

This scheme of education, to be sustained by the funds of the State, and to be controlled by that authority, was in accordance with the edicts and usages of the empire. Such establishments existed in the principal cities of every province. The design was to impart such a spirit and complexion to the educated life of every community subject to the sway of Rome as should be favourable to that sway. In such schools the youth of Britain studied the language and literature of Rome, and became familiar with science and art as known at that time to the Roman citizen. So prevalent did the use of the Latin language become, that Gildas speaks of the native tongue as having become almost obsolete. But this statement must be received with great limitation. The Latin tongue never rooted itself among the Britons as it did among the Gauls. Brittany was the only province in Romanized Gaul that retained the Celtic tongue; and there it was preserved mainly through the influence of settlers from this country. The traces of the Latin language which survived in Britain after the departure of the Romans were small. In the Roman settlements, and in their immediate neighbourhood, the fact no doubt was as Gildas has stated. In such districts the Latin was the language generally spoken.

* *Vita Agric.* xxi.

In their costume, their houses, their amusements, and even in their religion, the British in such places almost ceased to be British. Of the mansions, the villas, the porticos, the baths, the temples, the theatres, and other structures which adorned such localities, fragments only remain. The long centuries of barbarism and violence which followed were not favourable to the preservation of such monuments. Vestiges, however, from the wreck of that epoch of civilization in our history, may be seen in every museum, and are excavated almost daily from the sites on which it flourished.

Roman cities in Britain.

The reader who has seen Pompeii, or who has a just conception of that place from representation, may judge, without fear of mistake, concerning the appearance of the Roman houses and cities in Britain. The walls of the towns were of substantial and enduring masonry, rarely less than ten or twelve feet in thickness, and generally from twelve to fifteen feet in height. At given distances they were strengthened with round and projecting towers, and the gates appear to have been of wood, braced in various ways with iron. To a modern, the streets would seem narrow, the houses diminutive; but the entire space included within the walls was not great. Even the walls of Colchester included little more than a hundred acres, those of Kenchester about twenty, those of Lymne twelve, those of Richborough only four. It is probable that London itself did not then consist of more than three or four streets broad enough for wheels, those being the streets which led to the great outlets; but from which there branched off numberless lanes and alleys, as paths only to persons on horseback, or to foot-passengers. This sense of smallness is felt, we presume, by every one who visits Pompeii, unless prepared for its inspection by more than usual preliminary study. But if the general scale of things in one of our Roman cities would be deemed contracted, the ornament in the houses of the wealthy would be regarded as profuse,

and the conveniences, in the way of apparatus for warming, for baths, and the like, would be accounted extraordinary, as found within such limits. You see the floors covered with tesselated pavement; the walls frescoed with decorative paintings. The window-frames are filled with glass. The ceilings are rich in colouring, and in elaborated workmanship. The furniture is, for the most part, elegant and ornate. Altogether, the interior is such as would be seen in the houses of the wealthy in Italy, and in Rome itself. Of course the owners of such residences were not often natives, nor always Italians. Such houses were mostly the homes of military men, of government functionaries, and of successful merchants and landholders from all parts of the empire.

Influence of the Roman cities.

One of the most memorable seats of Roman opulence and taste in Britain was Caerleon, on the river Usk, in Monmouthshire. Caerleon stood at a good centre point in relation to the large territory of the Silures. On that spot, the bravest and the most powerful of the British tribes, subdued by the sword, were to be further subdued by the fascinations of art. According to the descriptions of Giraldus Cambrensis, the Roman antiquities on the site of Caerleon even so late as the twelfth century, must have been of as great magnitude as the ruins which have marked the site of Athens in our own time.* What Caerleon was to the

* *Itiner. Camb.* lib. i. c. 5. Caerleon is situated on the right hand of the Usk, which winds in considerable breadth and force through a rich valley. Two miles lower down, the river passes the now prosperous town of Newport, whence it widens rapidly, and soon discharges itself into the Bristol Channel. The land as you ascend the river to Newport is level, but as you approach 'the City of the Legion,' the valley is seen to be enclosed by a crescent of beautiful hills. The loftiest of those hills, on the Glamorganshire side of the valley, bears the name of Tŵymbarlwm (Tymbarlum). On that elevation there was a strong Roman encampment, which could hold easy communication with the powerful garrison on Campdown, on the opposite side of the Channel, and indeed with the whole extent of country from the Malvern Hills to Swansea. Of the antiquities of Caerleon the only indication now above ground is a rich basin-formed

Silures in the west, York was to the Brigantes, the great nation of the north; and Colchester and St. Albans stood in a similar relation to the Iceni, and to other native tribes of the east and south. Between these great points, as we have seen, the land was studded with cities or stations; all of which exhibited, on a larger or smaller scale, the same signs of civilization and wealth.

When Christianity had gained a place among the Britons, a new field was opened for the development of the tastes thus acquired. The learning of Pelagius and Celestius—British scholars known wherever the Latin language was spoken—was derived, we must suppose, from those public schools which the Romans had founded. In this manner the civilization of Rome, no less than its sword, was made to operate in favour of the Gospel. Christianity commends itself to intelligence and culture. Wherever it is to live, it must either find a soil of that nature, or create it.

Change in the manners of the Britons.

Such changes would, of course, affect the manners of the Britons. In this respect they had differed little from tribes in the same condition. While the greater part of the island was uncleared and undrained, the wild Indian sort of life which would be natural to many of the inhabitants may be imagined. But the more organized and settled communities had certain usages and characteristics in common. An ancient historian speaks of the Cornish Britons as being plain and simple in their manners, as wholly free from the craft and fraudulence so commonly found among the more civilized tribes of those times.* Tacitus, speaking of the Britons as the Romans had found them down to his time, says: 'They are willing to supply 'our armies with new levies; they pay their tribute

meadow, which marks the site of the old amphitheatre. There is, however, in the modern town, a neatly built museum, containing a good collection of antiquities from the ancient city.

* Diod. Sic. lib. v. c. 21.

'without a murmur; and they perform all the services of the government with alacrity, provided they have no reason to complain of oppression. When injured, their resentment is quick, sudden, and impatient; they are conquered, not broken-hearted; reduced to obedience, not subdued to slavery.'*

Our rude ancestors had, as will be supposed, their seasons of festivity, when the song, the lyre, and the dance contributed to their enjoyment. On the occasion of a marriage, or the successful issue of a war, and at given periods of the year, pleasure in these forms returned. Considerable change, we may be sure, came over their usages in this respect when they fell under the sway of the Romans. Their wars among themselves then came to an end. Many of them also became Christians, and by such, pagan customs would be wholly, or in great part, abandoned.

Morals of the Britons—Cæsar's accusation.

Concerning the domestic habits, and the general morals of the Britons, our opinion will be very low if we credit one statement made by Cæsar. According to this historian, the male members of a family, however numerous, had their wives in common, and the children borne by a wife passed for the children of her accredited husband.† It may be questioned, however, whether Cæsar had such knowledge of the Britons as to warrant him in making this statement. He could only have made such a report from hearsay; and we have no means of knowing what that hearsay was really worth. We doubt if it was even partially true. The conclusion may have been a hasty inference from appearances that should not have been so interpreted. The evidence which may be adduced as justifying scepticism on this point is various and considerable.

It is well known that chastity in women, is in general rigorously exacted by men in rude states of society. Even among barbarians, there are natural

* *Vita Agric.* c. xiii. † *De Bel. Gal.* v. 14.

instincts which operate as powerful safeguards in such relations—especially in a latitude like ours. Tacitus furnishes strong evidence to this effect in his account of the ancient Germans. It is Cæsar himself, moreover, who states that the Britons differed in scarcely anything from the Gauls; and among the Gauls, from whom the Britons derived their blood, their language, their religion, and their customs, no trace of any such usage is found. It is certain, also, that women among the Britons were held in high estimation. They shared in the honours of priesthood. The highest gifts pertained to them—inspiration, prophecy, the power of working miracles.* Females, when next in succession, became sovereigns, as we see in the case of Boadicea. Should a reigning queen take to herself a husband, she did not cease to be the possessor of the supreme power; as we see in the history of Cartismandua, the queen of the Brigantes. It was the wrong done to the chastity of the daughters of Boadicea that filled the cup of indignation among the Britons to overflowing. We further learn from Tacitus, that it was the scandalous proceeding of Cartismandua in marrying beneath her rank, that helped to produce such disaffection among her subjects as to compel her to fly to the Romans for protection. To these considerations, and more of the same complexion, we have to add the material fact, that this charge against the Britons rests on the authority of Cæsar alone.†

* Pomponius Mela, iii. 2.

† It should be added, that the literature of the Welsh, especially their ecclesiastical literature, goes far back in their history, and there is not a word in their laws, their traditions, or any of their writings, implying that any such custom had ever to be rooted out from among them. Neither Diodorus nor Strabo make any mention of this alleged usage, though both were familiar with what Cæsar had written. There is a passage, indeed, preserved from Dion Cassius, who wrote more than two centuries later, in which a British female is made to say, in defence of her countrywomen, that they only did openly with their equals, what the Roman ladies did secretly with their inferiors. But this is not Cæsar's story; and even this may be more safely interpreted as an ingenious mode of rebuking licentiousness in Rome, than as presenting a trustworthy report of what was

The Britons of both sexes who were in familiar intercourse with the military officers, the civil functionaries, and the wealthy settlers in this country, could hardly have been persons of the manners which the custom described by the Roman general would suggest. The children from the families of the opulent, whether Britons or Romans, grew up together in the same public schools. The parents, too, of both classes, often shared in common in the pomp and banqueting which took place in every Roman settlement, much as in Rome itself. We can easily imagine that the descendants of Caractacus were wont to meet the successors of Ostorius at the same board in the halls of Caerleon. In Verulam; in Richborough, in Lincoln, in York, times came round for such gatherings. The effect of this intercourse on the manners of the Britons is a matter of history. They did not fail to appreciate the refinements of their conquerors. They were only too willing to give themselves to such pleasures, and thus fell but too readily into the snare which had been laid for them. It is of a comparatively early stage in the revolution in taste and manners thus brought about that Tacitus writes in the following terms:—

'The Roman apparel was seen without prejudice, and the toga became a fashionable part of dress. By degrees the charms of vice gained admission to their hearts; baths and porticos and elegant banquets grew into vogue; and the new manners, which, in fact, served only to sweeten slavery, were, by the unsuspecting Britons, called the arts of polished humanity.'*

really taking place in Britain. So Tacitus aimed to shame the degenerate Romans, by giving his own colouring to the manners of the Germans. Xiphiline, indeed, attributes the usage imputed to the Britons by Cæsar, to the Caledonians in the time of Severus; but this is mentioned as a feature of the barbarism which distinguished that people, and so as to imply that such was not the custom of the Britons generally. We do not think, however, that it was the usage of the ancient Caledonians any more than of the ancient Britons. The abbreviator of Dion Cassius is not a sufficient authority on this point, taken alone.

* *Vita Agric.* xxii.

Summary.

Such was the course of change, for better and for worse, which came upon social life in Britain through the ascendency of the Romans. Some of the great men who conquered for Rome persuaded themselves that their conquests were on the side of humanity; and some who ruled in the name of that power believed that they were ruling to that end. But these larger and purer purposes of the wise, were sadly counteracted by the narrow and selfish policy of the unwise. The system, indeed, when once consolidated, remained the same. But despotic authority, under the names, and under some of the forms, of liberty, was at its centre; and the administrations related to that centre took their complexion from the character of the man who happened to be enthroned there. The sway of virtuous princes secured comparative tranquillity and happiness to more than a hundred millions of people. But such intervals of prosperity were only intervals. With the feeble and vicious ruler came the evils to be expected from such rule. On the whole, the condition of affairs in Roman Britain was fair and imposing on its surface, but hollow beneath. Corruption in Rome never failed to become the parent of corruption in all its dependencies. The distinctions of rich and poor obtained in some degree among the Britons even in their vanquished state. The arts of peace came into the place of the calamities of war. But even that change may not be a change for the better. What is gained in quiet and comfort, may be gained at a serious loss to virtue and manhood. By this process, the fidelity, the courage, and the national spirit, which had characterized the Britons in their rude state, were all deeply impaired. The men of substance were flattered, baited with pleasure, and rendered harmless by such means; and while the industrious furnished the conqueror with a revenue, the adventurous were made to replenish his armies in distant provinces. Such was the general policy of Rome. Britain was used so long as it could be used,

and was abandoned when it could be used no longer. It had been civilized into helplessness, and it was then left to its fate.

But retribution followed in the wake of this policy. In the history of the Roman power, an army of mercenaries came by degrees to be the only instrument by which that power could be maintained; and so, as might have been foreseen, the empire passed into the hands of that army. During four centuries of comparative poverty and hardship, Rome had grown wonderfully in her capacity both for conquest and for government. During the next three centuries, her authority was gradually extended over the three continents of the known world. In the centuries which follow, we see everything once distinctive of republican Rome become common to her world-wide provinces. We see the empire become the possession, either by accident or purchase, of some of the meanest and most wicked of mankind; and we have to look, for the greater part, on enterprise without greatness, on splendour without reality, and on tranquillity which proves to be the tranquillity of decay.

There is a majestic unity, a scientific grandeur, about the Roman law and its administration, which is apt to fascinate the imagination of some men. The fault we find with the Roman civilization is, that it gave the mind no object of public interest, and so did nothing to ensure that progress of thought, and that development of moral feeling, on which all true civilization must rest. In judging concerning civilization, we have to look first to the individual man, and to the amount of intelligence and virtue possible to him; and we have then to look to what society would be where all should be thus enlightened and thus moral. In pursuing this track of thought, the immediate effect must be, to feel how far the most civilized communities are from being really civilized. Nevertheless, here is the true conception of civilized life. It is real, in the measure in which it ensures intelligence and

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virtue to society, by ensuring it to the individuals of whom society is composed. It presents man at his best. All social tendencies are good but as they work towards this result. Tried by this test, the Roman civilization is lamentably wanting. Over persons and over provinces—over its great world, its tendencies were to depress thought to one dead level, to shut in virtue to one dull routine, to dwarf and deform humanity rather than to elevate and perfect it. It told men they were at liberty to buy and sell, to get gain and to enjoy, on any scale. If more intellectually disposed, they might study antiquities, speculate in philosophy, become artists or poets; but they must not presume to know anything about state matters. They must have no country, no dreams about patriotism or liberty. They must accept the imperial wisdom as always infallible, and never venture to question any of its proceedings. All the nobler aspirations of their nature must exist only to be checked, subdued, and to produce that sense of stifled nature, of heart-sickness, which a generous man so suffering can alone comprehend. Nor was escape possible, except by flying to the outposts of barbarism, and conforming to a life worse than death. The sphere of this deadly pressure was not that of a nation only. It embraced the world. It clutched its victims everywhere. Overshadowed by such a power, even the things which were told that they might live, could not live. Despotism is a form of treason against humanity, and it is a law of nature that humanity shall never serve it with its best.

Modern civilization has no doubt derived some advantages from the Roman laws, especially from those municipal laws which left to the cities of the empire some semblance of freedom when it had wholly disappeared elsewhere. But England owes really nothing to that source. Our laws are all from ourselves. They were born with us, and they have lived and grown with us. From the peiod we have now reached, the civil power of Rome ceases to have

any connexion with English history. Its days are numbered. It is soon to be no more.

The Britons outlive their conquerors.

But the Britons in the meanwhile are not to become extinct—are not to decay. Schooled by adversity, and elevated by the Christian influences which have taken root among them, they are to become intelligent, moral, devout, and are to be a people characterized by industry, and by high comparative virtue and happiness, when some fourteen centuries shall have passed away. One of the earliest of those national sayings which show the kind of life this people were destined to live, is—'Esteem the man 'who looks with love on the countenance of nature, 'on the works of art, and on the face of the little 'child.' The spirit of religion and of poetry remains with this people; and if the question be asked, What are the qualities essential to the true poet?—the answer from the same remote past is: 'An eye to see 'what is in nature, a heart to love it, and courage to 'follow it.' Instruction in this triad form is so old among the Britons, as to have been known to very ancient writers, both Latin and Greek, as the pages of Pomponius Mela and Diogenes Laertius show.*

* Lord Macaulay, in my humble judgment, greatly underrates both the British and the Saxon periods in our history. His sympathy with his subject can scarcely be said to begin until the Norman chivalry makes its appearance among us. I select two instances from a single paragraph, in illustration of the remark which I have felt bound to make.

His lordship says that the inhabitants of Britain, 'when first known to the Tyrian mariners, were little superior to the natives of the Sandwich Islands.'—Vol. i. 4. Our earliest knowledge of the Britons from Tyrian sources describes them as comparatively civilized in their manners, as fond of strangers, as industrious, as skilful in working mines, as wearing tunics of cloth descending to the feet, as just in their dealings, and as possessing herds of cattle. (See p. 7.) Is this a picture of the Sandwich Islanders as discovered by Captain Cook?

His lordship further says: 'Of the western provinces which obeyed the Cæsars, she [Britain] was the last that was conquered and the first that was flung away.'—Ibid. This may be true, and the conclusion which the antithesis tends to convey may be untrue. The remote and isolated position of this country made it the most difficult to reach

Effects of the Roman conquest on the distribution of race.

It will be proper to state, in this place, that the effect of the conquest by the Romans, and of the system founded upon it, was of a kind to leave very unequal traces of the British tongue, and of the British people, over the surface of the country. The chain of mountains stretching from the Highlands of Scotland into Derbyshire, sometimes called the English Apennines, divides that portion of the island into two great sections. The slopes of these mountains descend on the one side towards St. George's Channel, on the other towards the German Ocean. The eastern side of this great watershed embraces the level and rich lands between the Humber and the Forth, and over that space the traces of the past are very conspicuously Roman. But from the vale of Strathclyde, embracing a large tract of land in Dumbartonshire, from Cumberland, the old land of the Cumry, and along to the southward through Westmoreland, Lancashire, and the border counties of Wales, into Devonshire and Cornwall, the natives remain more thickly on the ground, and have given the impress of their language more generally to the objects which have survived them. The great northern line of road in those days, was not so much on the Lancashire as on the Yorkshire side of the Yorkshire hills, passing through Leicester, Lincoln, York, and Newcastle. This is one of the facts concerning the disturbance, and the new distributions of race, consequent on the settlement of the Romans in Britain, which contribute to explain some later facts in our history. The Britons of Cumberland and Cornwall were linked together by the Silures, whose territories extended through Cheshire and Shropshire down to the Welsh side of the Bristol

while Rome continued strong, and the most difficult to retain when Rome had become weak. Some rich provinces in the east were acquired later, and flung away sooner.—Gibbon, vol. i. c. i.

It is deeply to be regretted that the value of the most wonderful narrative this wonderful age has produced, should be so often impaired by strokes of rhetoric of this sort.

Channel. In the western half of the island, thus marked off for the most part by mountains or rivers from the eastern half, the Britons have never been more than partially displaced. Over this surface they have been largely amalgamated with other races; first with the settlers who came in with the Romans, and afterwards with Saxons and Danes. On the more southern and eastern side of the island, the blood which prevailed, even in the Roman period, was much more the blood of the stranger, or of a mixed race.

BOOK II.

SAXONS AND DANES.

CHAPTER I.

SOURCES OF ANGLO-SAXON HISTORY.

CÆSAR, the greatest of generals, and Tacitus, the greatest of historians, have been our chief authorities in relation to Roman Britain. More than a hundred Continental writers belonging to the first four or five Christian centuries have supplied fragments of information concerning this island. But many of those references are very brief, and of small value. Our best guides, next to Cæsar and Tacitus, have been Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, and Dion Cassius. Other lights have crossed our path at intervals, but made no stay—and now that we are about to pass from the Roman period to what was to follow, the twilight deepens.

Three sources of Anglo-Saxon history.

For our knowledge of Anglo-Saxon history we depend on three sources—on British writers; on the heathen poetry and traditions of the north of Europe; and on the Christian literature of the Saxons in Britain after they were converted.

British authorities.

Welsh history is by no means so barren a theme as is commonly supposed. But it does not throw much light on the history of the Anglo-Saxons. The work published under the title of *Annals of Wales* is one of the most meagre productions imaginable. Under some years there is no entry, and down to 1066 the average for each year does not exceed half a line.

This scantiness may be evidence of antiquity, but it is an antiquity that yields nothing, or next to nothing. The *Chronicle of the Princes* is fuller, more like the *Saxon Chronicle*, but it does not commence before the year 681, and its references to anything passing beyond the Welsh territory are few. The *Chronicle of Caradoc* is copied from the above, with some traditionary matter intermixed.* From these last sources, and still more from what is now known concerning the laws and institutions of the Welsh in times before the Conquest, a much more favourable conclusion than is generally adopted may be arrived at in regard to the civilization of that people.

It will appear, as we proceed, that Anglo-Saxon Britain may be said to have been subject to the last, not only to a difference between Danish law and Saxon law, but to three distinct codes of law—the laws of Northumbria, of Mercia, and of Wessex being in many respects different from each other. So it was in those days with the Britons. There was the Venedotian code for North Wales, the Dimetian code for South Wales, and the Gwent code for the south-east portion of that territory. The laws of the Celts on the western side of the Severn and of Offa's Dyke, had much in common; but they had also their differences, and it was thus with the Teutons on the eastern side of that line. The best known of these old British codes is that of Howell the Good. It may be traced to the first half of the tenth century. But it was itself, as may be imagined, a digest from laws and usages much more ancient.†

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* *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England.* Folio. 1841.

† 'Howell the Good, son of Cadell, prince of Cymru, summoned to him six men from every cantrev (one hundred townships) in all Cymru, to the White House on the Tav, in Dyved, and those of the wisest men in his dominion; four of them laics, and two clerks. The cause for bringing the clerks was, lest the laics should introduce what might be contrary to Holy Scripture.

'And they examined the laws: such of them as might be too severe

In these ascertained laws and institutions of Wales there is much to interest the historical student. He will possibly be surprised to see how a people accounted so rude contrived to place restrictions on the royal power, to distinguish between the legislative and executive functions of a state, and to leave as little as possible in the administration of law to the discretion of the magistrate. Not less unexpected, perhaps, will be the evidence of the care taken to determine the limits between governing and governed; to define the duties of husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant; to classify offences; to settle principles of evidence, and to adjust penalties to offences; to ensure a sober maintenance to the ministers of religion; to encourage commerce; and to confer honour on gifted, learned, and scientific men.*

All these seeds of civilization were in their course of development among the Britons, from the times when the greater number of them retreated westward. But many did not so retreat, and Anglo-Saxon history was to be affected considerably by these facts. The British writers, however, to whom we owe most in relation to English history, are Gildas, Nennius, Asser, and, we suppose we must add, Geoffrey of Monmouth.

Gildas.

There were three writers of the name of Gildas, who were contemporaries, or nearly so. The author of the historical work under that name was a monk of Bandon, in North Wales. He appears to have become thoroughly Romanized in his tastes, and to have brought a very bad temper to the work of disparaging all, whether Britons, Scots, or Saxons, who were not of that party. This *animus* is so manifest, that some have doubted if he was really a Briton. His pre-

in punishment, to mitigate; and such as might be too lenient, to render more vigorous. Some of the laws they suffered to remain unaltered; others they willed to amend; others they abrogated entirely; and they enacted some new laws.'—*Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales*, book iii. c. 1.

* Ibid.

BOOK II. CHAP. I.

judices in this respect have led him to make statements which are known to be false; and there is no doubt that his colouring generally is greatly exaggerated. Of course these facts are to be borne in mind in any use that is made of Gildas.*

Nennius.

Recent criticism has shown that the work which has been so long attributed to Nennius, was probably written by a Briton named Marcus, who became a bishop in Ireland. The work is now assigned to the year 822, and the great object of the writer is said to have been, to do honour to the memory of St. Germanus and St. Patrick. Nennius edited, or republished, the work about forty years later, and it has since borne his name. Many parts of this production consist of worthless traditions; but there is a vein of truth in it that may be separated to the purposes of history.† The same may be said of the old Welsh bards Aneurin, and Taliesin, and of the *Chronicle* by Tysilio—of which more presently.

Scandinavian poetry and tradition.

The poetry of Scandinavia makes us acquainted with the Saxon and the Dane along those stormy creeks and bays from which they launched forth as sea-kings some ten or twelve centuries since. It is well to know what those children of Odin were before the education of time and circumstances had given their descendants their great work to do in this island. The *Edda*, and the *Song of Lodbrok*, have their uses in this way. One of the first lessons of Providence to this seaman race was to give them a settled home, and to make them Christians; and, that done, we find them abstaining, with singular simplicity and sincerity, from all mention of what they had been as pagans. In that respect, the past with them was in a memorable degree the past. It is only as Christians that they become historians, and then a considerable space had intervened

* *Britannic Researches*, by the Rev. Beale Poste, 165–180.

† See the edition of this writer published by the Irish Archæological Society, and edited by the Rev. Dr. Todd and the Hon. Algernon Herbert. Dublin. 1848.

since their landing as freebooters on the shores of Britain. The space, however, between those events, was not such as to allow tradition to become uncertain concerning the one or the other. The north had been to them a region of myth and fable. In Anglo-Saxon Britain there was no growth of that description. The imagination became otherwise occupied. Christian superstitions came into the place of pagan fictions. But it is not difficult to distinguish between the superstitions, and the genuine history with which they are connected.*

Anglo-Saxon writers—Bede.

When the venerable Bede wrote his *Ecclesiastical History*, more than two centuries had passed since the landing of Hengist and Horsa; something more than a century had intervened since the founding of the last of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms; and about a century since the conversion of Ethelbert by the preaching of Augustine. Bede was not so far removed, therefore, from the great events in the early history of the Anglo-Saxons as to be incapable of giving us a report of those entitled to credit. His history was, in fact, so full, so trustworthy, and so extraordinary a performance, as produced in such circumstances, that the sources from which it was derived were in a singular degree superseded by it; and the very success of this narrative, appears to have been fatal to the preservation of much of the material on which it was based. We learn, however, from Bede himself, that this material existed, and whence it was obtained. He questioned all persons likely to furnish him with credible intelligence. He obtained assistance, he tells us, from abbots, bishops, and archbishops, and even from the archives of Rome. What could be done in this way he did, and no man could acquit himself with more conscientious integrity in his labour. His belief in miracles was the weakness of his age, and does not in the least detract from his

* Mallet's *Northern Antiquities.*

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credibility. His history was not his only work, but this description applies to all he has written.* It is to be regretted that his account of affairs in Wessex is so limited; but in those days this was a natural consequence of a residence so far north as Bishopswearmouth. This deficiency is in part supplied by the next great authority on this period — the *Saxon Chronicle.*

Saxon Chronicle.

Several manuscripts of the *Saxon Chronicle* are extant, more or less complete, and differing more or less from each other. Each of these manuscripts has had one transcriber until the date comes to about the middle of the ninth century, the transcripts being made probably from some earlier source, or sources, now lost. The later entries are by different hands, and mostly, it would seem, by contemporaries. Some suppose that we owe the transcriptions of the earlier portions to the patriotism of Alfred; but on that point we have no certainty. All are agreed in their estimate of the general accuracy and great value of this record. It begins with the Roman invasion, and in several manuscripts descends to some time below the Conquest. In the early part it contains passages from Bede and other sources. In its later portions the information is often less full than might have been expected. Its language is Saxon, mostly in the dialect of Wessex, sometimes in that of Mercia. In its later years the continuations are sometimes in Latin.†

Ancient laws of England.

The volume published by our Record Commissioners in 1840, intitled, *The Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, stands as our next authority. This volume is of great value. It contains the laws of the Anglo-Saxon kings from Ethelbert to Canute, the laws of the Conqueror, those called the laws of Edward the Confessor, and those ascribed to Henry I. It also contains a large body of ecclesiastical law, afford-

* *Monumenta Historica Britannica*, ubi supra.

† Ibid. *The Church Histories of England*, vol. ii. pt. 1. Preface.

ing frequent glimpses into the religious and social life of the time. With this publication we must class the *Domesday Book*, with the valuable 'Introduction' by Sir Henry Ellis; also the collection of the Anglo-Saxon charters edited by Mr. Kemble.*

Domesday Book—Charters.

The sources of information which remain are more fragmentary, consisting mostly of poetry and the lives of saints. Alfred and his age have a literary prominence, partly from the genius and writings of the king, and partly from the writings of Asser, a Welsh ecclesiastic whom Alfred attached as a scholar to his person and household.

Readers who observe the authors cited by our popular historians in connexion with Anglo-Saxon history, will be aware that many of those authorities do not belong to Anglo-Saxon times, but to times considerably after the Conquest. It will be seen also that they are commonly and silently adduced as if their testimony were of the first order and decisive. But does the case really so stand? Among the writers of this class we may mention Florence of Worcester, Simeon of Durham, Henry of Huntingdon, Roger of Hoveden, Alured of Beverley, and Ingulf of Croyland.

Anglo-Norman authorities.

The work which bears the name of Florence is derived mainly from Bede, Asser, the *Saxon Chronicle*, and a *History of Ely*. Florence died in A.D. 1118, and his work closes with that year. The Saxon language was familiar to him, and the manuscripts from which he copied are said to have been good. It is not, however, until this writer approaches his own time that his material becomes important. Simeon of Durham's *Chronicle* extends from the year 848 to 1129. It is taken almost wholly and literally from Florence. It contains some things, however, relating to the north, not to be found elsewhere; and more of the same material will be found in the *History of the Kings of*

Florence.

Simeon of Durham.

* *Codex Diplomaticus Ævi Saxonici.*

BOOK II, CHAP. I.

England, and in the *History of Durham*, by the same author. Huntingdon's narrative extends from the landing of Julius Cæsar to the first half of the twelfth century. On the history of the Anglo-Saxons Henry availed himself of the best known sources; and of some, both Welsh and English, which seem to have perished. He is full in his account of battles, and his narrative evinces a more free and manly spirit than is common with writers of his order. Hoveden lived to the beginning of the thirteenth century. His work is much cited by historians; but it is a transcript, almost from beginning to end, either of Simeon of Durham, or of Henry of Huntingdon. Alured of Beverley is a writer of the same description. His work consists of little more than transcriptions from Bede, Simeon of Durham, Florence of Worcester, and Geoffrey of Monmouth. But the work in this series which suggests the greatest caution in the use of these authorities is that attributed to Ingulf. Until within the last thirty years, this work has been freely cited as a sufficient authority on the wide range of historical representation contained in it. By the most competent judges, and on evidence only too manifest, its historical value has been shown to be very small.* Its errors and anachronisms, while professing to be an autobiography, are such as to cast a strong suspicion over the portions of true history that are to be found in it. The continuation by Peter of Blois is entitled to more credit, but that is another work.

Huntingdon.

Hoveden.

Alured.

Ingulf.

The historical romance by Geoffrey of Monmouth is little more than a rendering into Latin of the pretended *Chronicle* by the British writer Tysilio. We may believe Geoffrey when he tells us that he received the manuscript on which his work was founded from Armorica; but it seems no less clear that the work was

Geoffrey of Monmouth.

* Dr. Hickes exposed the fictions to be found in this work, a century and a half ago. Præfatio in *Thesaur. Ling. Vett.* p. xxix. ed. Oxon. 1703. See also *Quarterly Review*, xxxiv. 248 et seq., by Sir Francis Palgrave. Lappenberg, vol. i. pp. li. lii. *Monumenta Historica Britannica.*

that attributed to Tysilio, who was a Briton, and lived in the early part of the eleventh century.* Neither production is of much value in regard to history, though both are objects of interest as relating to the literature of the times in which they were produced. The *Chronicle* attributed to Matthew of Westminster contains some information relating to early Saxon and British affairs not found in other writers, and which may have been derived from trustworthy sources no longer existing. But as the sources are not mentioned, such passages are of no great authority. William of Malmesbury belongs to a limited class of writers, who, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, aimed at something above compilation, and took the classical historians as their model. The imitation, as will be supposed, was not always in good taste. But Malmesbury is a valuable guide.

Tysilio. Westminster. Malmesbury.

The above instances will suffice to show the measure of authority which belongs to Anglo-Norman writers in regard to Anglo-Saxon history. We should add also, that in the men who write upon our history after the Conquest, a bias is often perceptible, disposing them greatly to underrate the Saxon nationality. Modern writers have not always been sufficiently on their guard against this influence, nor always sufficiently mindful of the fact, that in relation to British and Anglo-Saxon history, these writers can never be more than second-hand authorities. The question in regard to most of them is, not what have they said concerning times so long anterior to their own, but what authority have they had for what they say? It is not enough that a modern historian professes to restrict himself to original authorities. Two things more are necessary—the intelligence that can estimate those authorities at their proper value, and the integrity which shall ensure that an honest use is made of them.

Authority of Anglo-Norman writers.

* Poste's *Britannic Researches.*

CHAPTER II.

THE MIGRATION.

Britain on the departure of the Romans.

ON the departure of the Romans, authority seems to have passed very much into the hands of the Roman settlers, and partly into the hands of the more able men among the Britons, or of such as claimed descent from the native princes. The usages found among the Britons of a later age, and which no doubt obtained among them even at this early period, were both monarchical and popular. Government was everywhere by kingship, and everywhere by popular assemblies. The obligations imposed on the tything and the hundred by the Anglo-Saxons, had been long before imposed by the Britons on kindred. The men responsible for each man's good conduct, were not men of the same neighbourhood, but men of the same blood.* How much of this usage was tolerated under the Romans is not known, but it became general when the Britons were left to themselves. The British code of penalties was, in common with the Anglo-Saxon, very much a code of fines and compensations, wherever compensation was possible. But organizations of this nature had been too much disturbed by the Romans to be soon restored and settled. An interval also was to pass in which feud was to do its usual mischief.

The Picts and Scots.

The great difficulty of the Romans during the last two centuries of their rule in Britain, came from the frequent incursions of the Caledonians, who were in

* *Laws of Howell the Good*, book iii. chap. 1.

possession of the country north of the wall of Antoninus. These *Caledonii* of the Romans appear to have received a large accession of settlers in those days from Ireland; and with this migration came the names of Scots and Picts. After the opening of the fourth century the whole people north of the Tyne are often so designated. Those tribes or clans knew nothing of the civilization which the Romans had introduced among the people of the south; or knew it only to despise it as effeminate, and as the badge of servitude. They did nothing in the way of ploughing or sowing. It was their pleasure to roam about with their flocks and herds, and what they did not secure as wandering herdsmen, they obtained by hunting, or by levying contributions on their weaker neighbours. Gildas describes them as differing in some degree from each other in manners, but as influenced by the same thirst for blood, and as being more disposed to shroud their 'villanous faces' in bushy hair, than to cover their persons with decent clothing.* The name Pict comes from their own language, and could hardly have been used to denote the stained or pictured appearance of their bodies.

Repulsed by the Britons.

When these troublesome neighbours heard of the departure of the Romans, they soon began to make incursions southward. The resistance they met with was at first more formidable than they had expected. Many who had served in the Roman army, both natives and settlers, resumed their weapons. Profiting by such leadership, the Britons repelled the invaders. But the enemy learnt wisdom from disaster. They came in greater numbers, and with better organization.

Assistance rendered by the Romans.

The Britons began to be much discouraged. They sent delegates to seek assistance from the Romans. The Emperor Honorius despatched a legion from Gaul to their help; the Romans chased the Scots back to their forests and fastnesses; but this force did not

* *Hist.* § 19. Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* lib. i. c. 2.

remain in the island.* In the year 423 the Britons were again petitioners for help, and in 426 another legion appeared among them, led by Gallio Ravennas, a general who not only inflicted signal chastisement on the Scots, but spared no pains to put the Britons in the way of defending themselves for the future. By his advice they relinquished the wall of Antoninus, and with it the whole of the country between Newcastle and Edinburgh. He superintended the repairs of the wall of Severus, and urged the Britons to guard it well, as their most natural boundary northward. He warned them, moreover, that the Scots were not their only enemies. He assured them that they had fully as much to fear from the Frank and the Saxon; and, before leaving them, he gave them his assistance in raising fortresses, and many places of observation, along the southern coast. This was in 427.†

Final departure of the Romans.

Eight years later a great battle was fought between the Scots and the Britons of the north. It is said to have been the most formidable encounter that had ever taken place between the two races. Its issue was disastrous to the Britons. In 446 they seem to have made an effort to throw off the yoke which had been thus imposed on them, but without effect. It was by this section of the Britons, and in these circumstances, that the letter preserved in Gildas, intitled 'The Groans of the Britons,' appears to have been written. It is addressed to Etius, the Roman governor in Gaul. It has been accepted by modern historians as genuine, and no document has done so much towards producing an unfavourable impression in regard to the character of the Britons generally at this juncture. But in our estimate of this people it becomes us to look to their history as a whole, and to look well to the quarter where the blame of much that may seem blameworthy should be laid. It had been so long the policy of the

Picture of Britain by Gildas.

* Gildas, *Hist.* § 16. Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* lib. i. c. 12. Nennius, § 30.
† Bede, *Hist.* lib. i. c. 12. Gildas, *Hist.* §§ 17, 18.

Romans to deprive the Britons of all native leadership, that we scarcely need wonder if, when liberty was given them to avail themselves of such aid, it had ceased to exist.

Great was the change which had come over the countrymen of Caractacus during the last four hundred years—the men who, in their time, had known how to chase before them, not only whole cohorts, but even legions of their oppressors. Great, too, was the change which had come over the affairs of South Britain within a quarter of a century after the final departure of the Romans. Gildas wrote something more than a century later; and, though we take his descriptions with great deduction, it is hardly to be doubted that the safety of life and property ceased for a time through a large portion of the island. Lands which had been wont to yield abundant harvests lay uncultivated. Villages and towns were to a large extent deserted and in ruins. Such of the Britons as opposed themselves to the Scots rarely did so in the open field, but waylaid them in the forests and passes. The monuments of Roman art were everywhere mutilated, or allowed to go to decay. Famine and disease came in the train of these disorders. It is difficult, however, to say to how much of the country this description would apply, or how long it continued. We know that in the fifth century, when a formidable invasion by the Scots was said to be in preparation, the Britons of the south and west had their kings. Vortigern was then king over the people bordering on the Thames, and the Britons who disputed the entrance of Scot and Saxon for the next hundred years, did so under kings as leaders, and did so with no little courage and perseverance. To this interval belong all the chivalrous narratives concerning Aurelius, Uther Pendragon, and King Arthur.

The King Vortigern mentioned, is the chief who has become so memorable in our history from his invitation to the Saxons to become his auxiliaries in resisting the

The Saxons.

BOOK II. CHAP. 2.

Scots. The first mention of the Saxons in history is by Ptolemy the geographer. Ptolemy makes them to be of Scythian descent. They were manifestly a branch of the great Teutonic family, and included tribes under various names besides those properly known as Saxons. About the middle of the second century the Saxons were in possession of that part of the shore of the modern duchy of Holstein which lies between the mouths of the Eyder and the Elbe. The Baltic side of the duchy, which still bears the name of Anglen, was the country of the Angles; and the home of the Jutes—the Jutland-men—stretched indefinitely northward. Two centuries later these tribes, under the general name of Saxons, had spread their conquests so far south as to be found over the whole space between the Eyder and the Rhine. In the middle of the fifth century, the time now under review, their territory embraced the whole country along the coast of the German Ocean, including both West and East Friesland, Holland, and Zealand, besides Westphalia and Saxony, and countries further north.*

The part of those regions in which the Saxons are first known, was fringed with the most intricate shores, embracing many inlets and islands. Everywhere they were exposed to the influences of northern cold and tempest. Everything there seemed to combine for the purpose of training a hardy race to maritime adventure. The Saxons became all that a map would suggest as probable in the history of rude tribes so placed. Steady industry they despised. Their great trust was in their swords. Plunder by sea or by land was their chief vocation. Band after band, as they subdued districts, settled in them, compelling the van-

* Ptol. *Geog.* ii. c. 2. Eutrop. ix. Steph. Byzant. voc. *Saxones.* Orosius, lib. i. § 1. Ad Bremen. ccx. Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* lib. i. c. 15; lib. v. c. ii. Cluver. *Ant. Germ.* iii. 96 et seq. *Chron. Sax.* an. 449.

quished to do their husbandry, while they went forth themselves from season to season in search of new adventure and new spoil. Every man had his chief, to whom he promised fidelity; and when an enterprise embraced several chiefs, one was invested with supreme command for the occasion. They used the bow, the spear, the sword, the battle-axe, and a club with spikes projecting from a knob at the end, and sometimes called the 'hammer.' The last three of these weapons were of great length and weight. But the men of the Saxon race were generally above the middle stature, powerfully built, and could make these implements fall with terrible effect upon an enemy. They wore helmets, the metal of which descended on either side the head to the ears, and sometimes sent a line of protection down the centre of the forehead. All the more exposed parts of their persons were guarded in like manner.

Saxons of the fifth century.

Of course this description applies to the Saxons of the fifth century; in their earlier adventures there was little of this martial presence about them. In those early days their boats or vessels were mostly of lath and osier work, overlaid with skins. But in the time of Vortigern the chiule of the Saxon pirate vied with the Roman galley in strength and spaciousness. So armed, and with such vessels, the Saxon sea-kings, as they were called, became the terror of their time, especially along the coasts of Gaul and Britain. Before Saxon Britain was heard of, Britain, Belgium, and Gaul had their Saxon-shore—coast lands so called in consequence of their exposure to attacks from this formidable enemy. In the fifth century, their numbers, their skill, their audacity, and their cruelty, had combined to make them the most dreaded foe of civilization north of the Rhine. Constantine the Great, Theodosius, and Stilicho, had distinguished themselves by their attempts to check the incursions of these assailants. But as the strength of the empire declined, the boldness of these enemies increased. In

fact, they made rapid progress in the art of war by means of the encounters with civilized and disciplined foes to which they were from time to time committed. The event to be desired was, that their successes should open to them inducements to relinquish a mode of life so pregnant with evil to themselves and to humanity. The qualities conspicuous in them were such as to ensure their eminent success in the race of civilization, should circumstances arise to dispose them to such pursuits.

Hengist and Horsa —Saxon account.

Our Saxon authorities relate, that in the year 447 or 449, Vortigern, a British king near the Thames, invited two Saxon chiefs, named Hengist and Horsa, to assist him in repelling an invasion by the Picts and Scots; that these chiefs, who were brothers, landed in Thanet, a portion of Kent separated from the mainland of that district by a river; that the Saxons soon chased the Scots from the lands they had devastated; that with the consent of Vortigern, the Saxon force in Thanet was increased considerably; that this increase caused distrust among the Britons; that the increase of pay thus made necessary led to disputes; that these disputes issued in open war; that after a long series of conflicts, victory declared in favour of the Saxons; that Hengist became king of Kent, and in the year 488 bequeathed his authority to his son Æsca, having exercised it fifteen years.

British account.

Our British authorities say that Hengist and Horsa were exiles in search of a home; that the increase of the force in Thanet was treacherously managed; that the design of that movement was to conquer the country; that Hengist had a beautiful daughter named Rowena, who, when the Saxon and British chiefs were over their cups, was employed to present a goblet to Vortigern; that Vortigern fell into the snare thus laid for him, by becoming enamoured of Rowena, so as to be prepared to barter the kingdom of Kent as the price of possessing her person; that in the wars which ensued, Vortigern was disowned by

his subjects, and his son Vortimer raised to sovereignty in his stead; that for several years Hengist was compelled to seek refuge in his ships, and to subsist by his piracies; that at a feast afterwards given by the Saxon leaders, some three hundred British chiefs were treacherously murdered; that the only one of the British chiefs who was spared was Vortigern; and that, notwithstanding the alleged unpopularity of this prince, to secure the liberation of Vortigern, the people of Kent, Sussex, Middlesex, and Essex consented to receive Hengist as their king.*

Estimate of these accounts.

The discrepancies between these two accounts are such as we might expect from sources so distinct and so hostile. But there is a substance of statement common to them both, sufficient to show that Hengist and Horsa are historical persons, and that the commonly understood facts of their lives may be received as history. To attempt to reduce them to mythic personages, and to conclude that we really know nothing of the matter, would be to follow a fashion in criticism, and to underrate the lights of the past. It is very probable that Hengist and Horsa were chiefs in search of a home, and that their policy from the first was to find a home in this country, either by stipulation or the sword. But the story concerning the slaughter of the British chiefs comes from Nennius. Had it been a fact, Gildas could not have been ignorant of it, and would not have failed to give it prominence. An account of the conquests of the Saxons in Thuringia contains a similar fiction.

Rise of the Saxon Octarchy.

Horsa fell in an early encounter with the Britons. Hengist, as the Saxon authorities relate, did not become sovereign of Kent before the year 473—more than twenty years after his first compact with Vortigern. The British accounts indicate that the resistance made was thus obstinate, and in part success-

* Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* lib. I. c. 15. *Chron. Sax.* ad ann. 449 et seq. Gildas, *Hist.* §§ 23–26. Nennius, §§ 31, 36–38, 43–45.

BOOK II. CHAP. 2.

ful; and the space intervening between the rise of this first state of the Saxon Octarchy, and the rise of the last, is a century and a half. Sussex, the kingdom of the South Saxons, was the second state established. It was founded by Ella in 496. This was the smallest state of the Octarchy. The state of the West Saxons, which dates from the year 519, was of much greater extent, embracing Surrey, Berks, Dorset, Somerset, and Devon, with parts of Hampshire and Cornwall. The founder of this sovereignty was Cerdic. East Anglia included Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridge, the Isle of Ely, and part of Bedfordshire, and was established by Uffa in the year 540. Erkenwen laid the foundation of the state of the East Saxons, which comprehended Essex, Middlesex, and a southern district of Hertfordshire. This kingdom commences with the year 542. The kingdom of Bernicia was established by Ida in 548, under whom the Angles possessed themselves of Northumberland, and of the northern parts of Westmoreland and Cumberland, with the part of Scotland between Newcastle and Edinburgh. The kingdom of Deira embraced Lancashire and Yorkshire, with the southern divisions of Westmoreland and Cumberland. While this kingdom continued separate the Saxon states in Britain were an Octarchy; its union with Northumbria, which was the case for the most part, reduced them to a Heptarchy. We have seen that the kingdom of the South Saxons was founded by a chief named Ella; and it was a chief of that name who founded the kingdom of Deira, about sixty years later. Mercia, the last of the Saxon kingdoms, does not make its appearance before the year 586; but it was, in regard to extent of territory, the most considerable state in the Octarchy, comprehending all the midland counties, and forming for centuries the great barrier kingdom between the Saxons and the Welsh.*

It will be seen from this sketch that the conquest

* Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* passim. *Chron. Sax.* ad ann. 449–588.

of the Saxons followed the same track that had been taken by the Romans. From the coast of Kent the invaders gradually spread themselves southward, northward, and westward—the country of Caractacus, which was the last to submit to the Romans, being the last to submit to the Saxons. Where the Romans had been most ascendant, the Saxons gained their earliest and their easiest victories. In this manner did the portion of our island known by the name of England pass into the hands of the people from whom it derived that name.

Course of the Saxon conquests.

During a hundred and fifty years the Britons continued to measure weapons with the Saxons in defence of this soil; a fact sufficient to warrant distrust of the pictures given of this people by Gildas. The chivalrous performances assigned to this period of British history by British tradition and romance may be entitled to little credit. But fictions so impassioned and so permanent imply facts—the mythic Arthur supposes a real one. The conception of an age of heroes can have no place with a people who are not themselves heroic. It is unfortunate, indeed, for the fame of those supposed heroes that writers so near their time as Bede and Gildas should seem to have heard so little about them. But, on the other hand, the writings of the ancient bards, Aneurin and Taliesin, and those of Nennius, of Tysilio, and of Geoffrey of Monmouth, point to the channel through which the faith of a people in regard to that heroic age has descended. We have no great confidence in what these writers record as facts, but there is an historical significance in the spirit which pervades their productions. The renowned Arthur is not an Armorican, but strictly a British hero. The conception of him has come to us from a people whose descendants are still living about us.

British resistance.

We have now seen that the forty years between the departure of the Romans and the coming in of the Saxons were, for the most part, years of retrogression

Summary.

in British history. Even then, the season of inquietude and disaster had not come to an end. The ravages of the Saxons were to follow those of the Picts and Scots; and though the Saxon was a less barbarous antagonist than the Scot, his wars seemed for a time to have completed what his precursor had done only in part. The sea-king from the Elbe has come into the place of the prefect of the Tiber, and the general change is such as this change of names will suggest. Very memorable in English history is this Second Revolution by the Sword.

CHAPTER III.

RISE OF THE ENGLISH MONARCHY—EGBERT.

THE wars of rude communities possess so much in common, as to be entitled to small consideration from the historian. But there are instances in which such narratives may have their place among the valuable materials of history. Such events may illustrate the character of a people, and may have influenced their local settlements. They may have contributed in this way to the development or the modification of the languages, the institutions, and the usages of races. In all these respects the war-history of Anglo-Saxon Britain was influential, and merits a degree of attention on this account that would not otherwise be due to it.

Anglo-Saxon wars—their relation to history.

The wars of the Saxons during the first three centuries after their settlement in Britain, were wars carried on in part with the natives, and in part with each other. Every state was won by the sword, and kept only by the sword. The dangers of each state in its earlier history, came from the partially vanquished Britons; in its later history, from the rivalries which grew up between the new sovereignties when established. It must suffice to touch on the outline of this subject, and especially on such points as indicate a tendency to substitute unity for partition—to give existence to a central and consolidated sovereignty.

During more than twenty years Hengist and his followers were engaged in frequent and deadly hostilities with the Britons. Not until the close of that interval can the kingdom of Kent be said to have been

Native resistance

BOOK II. CHAP. 3.

established. Aylesford, Crayford, and Wippendsfleet are places in that county which became memorable in the history of this struggle.* Ella, and his three sons, who established the neighbour kingdom of the South Saxons, met with a resistance no less resolute and protracted. The great forest of Andreds-lea was long an asylum to the Britons in their reverses. Cerdic, the founder of the kingdom of the West Saxons, which embraced a much larger territory than either of the states above mentioned, was engaged in hot wars with the Britons over the west of England, from 495 to 519. Thus slow and costly was the progress of the Saxon chiefs generally, in giving existence to the several states of the Heptarchy.†

Intention of the Saxons in their descents upon Britain.

But it does not appear that any one of the branches of the great German family who thus sought a new home in Britain, did so with the intention of continuing the piratical and marauding life to which they had been accustomed in their own country. With the possession of a richer soil, and under the influence of a more genial climate, they were prepared to turn their thoughts towards the arts of peace, and towards the means necessary to give security to their acquisitions and their power.

Office of Bretwalda.

The language of Bede and of the *Saxon Chronicle* is explicit as to the fact that during the first century of the Heptarchy, one of its princes generally possessed a precedence of the rest, under the title of the Bretwalda, or the 'wielder.' Some seven, indeed nine, princes are named, as having sustained this dignity. But there were intervals in which the authority of the prince claiming that precedence was not more than partially acknowledged. Indeed, during more than a century and a half it ceased to exist; and the real power of the Bretwalda at any time was so limited

* *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 449–488. *Chron.* Ethelwerd, c. i. Bede, *Hist.* c. 15.

† *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 477–519. Ethelwerd, c. 1.

and undefined, that it is impossible now to say in what it consisted. In its existence, however, we see evidence that the existence of some such authority was felt to be highly expedient, if not necessary; and it gives us the embryo of the power which was at length to centre in a single person as monarch of all England.*

Disputes concerning this precedence gave rise to the first war of one Anglo-Saxon state upon another. Ella of Sussex, from some unknown cause, was the first Bretwalda. On his decease, Ethelbert of Kent, then only sixteen years of age, laid claim to that rank. But his competitor was Ceawlin, the powerful King of Wessex, who humbled him in battle. Ceawlin gained repeated victories over the Britons, united the territory of the South Saxons to that of the West Saxons, and survived as Bretwalda to the year 593. On the death of Ceawlin, the disputed title was conferred on Ethelbert, who retained it to the year 616. But it did not pass into the hands of his son. Redwald, King of the East Angles, was its next possessor. No power had ever been so formidable to the Picts and Scots as Northumbria became about this time; and the terror with which the severities of the settlers in those northern provinces had filled their freebooting neighbours lasted for several generations. Edwin of Northumbria became Bretwalda in 627; and was the most potent among the princes who had hitherto borne that title. Not only the Saxon, but the British kings, are said to have acknowledged his sovereignty, so far as to pay him tribute; and his own dominions, besides including the united kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira, extended so far as to include the Isle of Anglesea and the Isle of Man.

But Mercia became jealous of Northumbria. In 633, Penda of Mercia, and Ceadwalla of North Wales,

* Bede, *Hist.* ii. 5. *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 827. Ethelwerd, iii. c. 2.

combined their forces against that kingdom. In a battle at Hatfield, in Yorkshire, Edwin, and one of his sons, were slain; another son was murdered when the battle had ceased. Such members of the family of Edwin as survived sought refuge with their relative then ruling in Kent. The victors overran the prostrate country, pillaging without limit, and destroying without mercy, the Christian Welsh, exceeding, it is said, in their atrocities, the pagan Mercians. But Oswald, a nephew of Edwin, at length avenged the fate of his kindred; and, under his powerful sway, the two northern kingdoms were once more united. Oswald was the sixth Bretwalda; but his reign was short. In the eighth year of his sovereignty he, too, was defeated by the Mercians under Penda. Oswald was succeeded, both as king of Northumbria, and as Bretwalda, by his brother, Oswy, who strengthened his claim to the throne by marrying his cousin, the daughter of Edwin. Through the next twenty-eight years — years of storm and change — the sceptre of Northumbria was wielded by a strong hand. But Oswy was the last Bretwalda. He died in 670.*

Surface of Britain not favourable to a continuance of the Heptarchy.

It thus appears that the office of Bretwalda was recognised, more or less, among the Anglo-Saxons during nearly two centuries—from the death of Hengist, in 488, to the death of Oswy, in 670. The office had come into existence from a sense of common danger and of common interest; and it owed its continuance to the feeling in which it had originated. This danger was apprehended as likely to come from the Britons in the west, from the Scots in the north, and from the unsettled hordes on the other side the German Ocean. But the idea of combination against these foes was more an idea than a reality. Experience had shown this; and the function of Bretwalda appears to have ceased as it became manifest that the uses of it

* *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 488–670. Ethelwerd, lib. i. 11. Bede, *Hist.* ii. 5.

were imaginary. But so long as a Bretwalda was acknowledged, there was the probability that a powerful chief, under that title, would some day become king of Anglo-Saxon Britain. From the manner in which the Saxons became possessed of the country, it was natural that it should be parcelled out into a number of separate and comparatively small sovereignties. But there was nothing in the surface of the country to favour the perpetuity of the state of things so originated. Greece, by the intersections of its seas and mountains, appeared to be mapped out by the hand of Providence to become the home of a number of small and independent states. Not so that part of Britain which has since become known as England. The fastnesses of Wales, and the Yorkshire and Grampian Hills, might long present impediments in the way of a great national unity. But over the remaining portion of the island the lines of separation between territory and territory were so faint, that the necessary alternative was, between a state of almost perpetual feud, and the concentration of the several states into one by some leader powerful enough to realize such a change. But the office of Bretwalda is perpetuated through nearly two centuries, and no one of the princes sustaining it becomes thus potent. And now a hundred and thirty years intervene between the death of the last Bretwalda and the accession of Egbert, sometimes described as the first king of England; and two centuries and a half are to pass before the accession of Athelstan, the first Anglo-Saxon king really entitled to that description.

Ascendency of Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex.

The history of the Anglo-Saxons during something more than the first half of the next two hundred and fifty years is mainly the history of the three principal states—Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex. These states, as seen on the map, form a crescent, one point of the curve taking its start from the part of Scotland bounded by Glasgow and Edinburgh, and the other point terminating in Cornwall. In the hollow

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of this crescent lies the home of the Welsh; beyond the outer line of it, and stretching towards the English Channel and the German Ocean, lay the kingdom of the East Saxons, Sussex, Kent, and East Anglia. An intelligent conception of this period in English history is not possible without keeping these facts in mind.

Northumbria.

During the hundred and thirty years between the death of Oswy, the last Bretwalda, and the accession of Egbert to the throne of Wessex, the sceptre of Northumbria passed into new hands upon the average every seven or ten years. Of these princes, the one-half perished in the constantly recurring wars of the period; and the other half, with only one or two exceptions, were despatched or dethroned by their own subjects. These facts suggest much in regard to the disorder and crime prevalent among that people. But the reality in this case was such as hardly to be reached by the imagination.

Egfrid, who succeeded Oswy his father, compelled both the Scots and the Mercians to respect his territory. But his wars were incessant—now with the Mercians, now with the Irish, and now with the Scots. In an expedition against the latter he was beset in the passes of the country, and experienced a signal defeat. His own body was among the slain. Few of his followers escaped. An army sent against the Scots by Aldfrid, his successor, shared the same fate. The reign of Aldfrid, 'the learned,' was comparatively peaceful. But on his decease the history of Northumbria becomes such a calendar of enormities that we feel no disposition to dwell upon it. Kindred struggled against kindred for the possession of the supreme power: the prize seized at the cost of perfidy and blood to-day, was snatched away by hands as little scrupulous to-morrow; and men who had hoped to brave the storm in which so many had perished, were glad to escape from the fury everywhere abroad, by seeking admission to a convent, as affording them their only chance of security and repose. Charle-

magne denounced these Northumbrians as 'a per-
'verse and perfidious nation, worse than pagans.'*

Power of Mercia.

Mercia, we have seen, was the middle kingdom, between Northumbria on the one hand, and Wessex on the other. With a powerful rival on either side, and with such bad neighbours as the Welsh along its whole western border, it seemed necessary to its independence that it should be the strongest kingdom of the three. But the comparative power of these states depended on power in their kings; and each oscillated accordingly, as their monarchs happened to be men of capacity, or devoid of it.

Oswy of Northumbria acquired a partial ascendency over Mercia. But before his decease in 670, the Mercians asserted their independence, and something more. In 661 Wulphere, the son of Penda, who then ruled in Mercia, overran Wessex, and attached portions of its territory to his own. But Wulphere died in 675, and before his death Egfurth of Northumbria had again turned the scale in favour of the northern kingdom. Ethelred, who reigned over Mercia the next thirty years, sustained its independence and reputation. Little need be said of the two immediate successors of Ethelred—Cænred and Ceolred. The first retired to a monastery after a reign of five years. The second shortened his days by licentiousness. Their conjoint reigns numbered twelve years, and these appear to have been years of quiet to their subjects.

Ethelbald, the next king of Mercia, reigned from 716 to 757. He was a man of dissolute habits through the greater portion of his life. But he was also a man of capacity, both in council and in the field. For a time, not only the lesser states of the Heptarchy, but even Wessex, acknowledged his authority.

But in 752 the West Saxons cast off the yoke which

* Bede, *Hist.* iii. 14–27; iv. 26; v. 23. *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 617–800. Malms. *de Reg.*

Ethelbald had imposed on them. In a memorable battle at Burford in Oxfordshire, the Mercians were not only defeated, but the panic which seized the army was attributed to a want of courage in their king. A few years later Ethelbald was succeeded by the celebrated Offa.

Rise of Offa.

The first fourteen years in the reign of Offa were spent in quelling disaffection among his own subjects. Subsequently he waged successful wars against Kent, and Wessex, and the Britons. To guard his territory against the incursions of the latter enemy, he constructed a trench and embankment, known in after times as 'Offa's Dyke.' This work parted off the border territory of the Welsh from that of the Mercians, over the whole line of country from the neighbourhood of Chester to the lower banks of the Severn.

Offa and Charlemagne.

Through the influence of the Anglo-Saxon scholar Alcuin, a correspondence took place between Offa and Charlemagne. The king of the Franks performed the office of mediator between Offa and certain Mercian thanes who had become exiles in France as the consequence of having committed themselves against the authority of Offa in the early period of his reign. We learn also that Charlemagne felt aggrieved by some fiscal irregularities attributed to certain Mercian manufacturers who imported woollen goods into France. On these matters the result of the communications between the two kings was satisfactory. But not so on matters of another kind. Charles requested the hand of a daughter of Offa for one of his illegitimate sons. Offa, in return, requested the hand of a French princess for his eldest son Egfurth. But this presumption, as it was deemed, offended the pride of the Frank, and the correspondence between the two kings came to an end.

The hand of the princess which Charlemagne had solicited for his son was afterwards sought by Ethelbert,

king of East Anglia. Ethelbert was young and accomplished, and possessed of many estimable qualities. Approaching the borders of Mercia, the young king despatched a messenger with presents, and with a letter, stating the object of his errand. In reply, assurance was given of a cordial welcome; and on his arrival, himself and his retinue were received with every apparent demonstration of respect and good feeling. As the advance of the evening brought the feasting and merry-making to a close, Ethelbert withdrew to his chamber. Presently a messenger sought access to him, and stated that the king wished to confer with him on some matters affecting the purpose of his visit. Ethelbert at once followed the footsteps of his guide. But the way led through a dark narrow passage, and there, from invisible hands, the confiding youth received a number of wounds which at once deprived him of life. Offa affected surprise, indignation, the deepest grief; he would see no one, and so on. But history points to his wife as having suggested this atrocious deed, and to himself as having consented to it. It is enough to say that Offa seized on the domains of his murdered guest. But in two short years the blood-guilty monarch was called to his account. This crime has fixed infamy on the name of Offa and his queen. Unhappily, such deeds were not rare in the history of ruling men and ruling women through this period of our history. Egfurth, the son of Offa, reigned but a few months; and, after a few years of vicissitude and misfortune, that once powerful family became extinct.

Murder of Ethelbert.

Cenulf, of the family of Penda, was the next king of Mercia. His reign is chiefly remarkable from his invasion of Kent, and from the part taken by him in certain ecclesiastical disputes which will claim our attention in another place. Kenelm, his son, a boy of seven years of age, was murdered a few months after his accession. Ceolwulf, who succeeded him,

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was dethroned in the second year of his sovereignty. Beornwulf, the next in succession, had to submit to the rising power of Egbert of Wessex.*

Progress of Wessex.

We are now come upon a track which promises to bring us within sight of the object of our search—a concentration of the sovereignty in Anglo-Saxon Britain. We have seen that in 488 Ceawlin, king of Wessex, became Bretwalda, on the decease of the first great Saxon adventurer, Hengist of Kent. Ceawlin was succeeded by his nephews Ceolric and Ceolwulf. The reign of Ceolwulf was long, and eminently successful. The Scots and Picts, the Britons and the Saxons, all felt the power of his hand. The South Saxons struggled in vain to become independent of his sway. The Britons he compelled to leave the plains of Gloucestershire, and to seek an asylum on the opposite banks of the Severn. On the death of Ceolwulf, in 611, the successive reigns of the two nephews were followed by the conjoint reign of two brothers, Cynegils and Cuichelm, sons of Ceolwulf. Through twenty-four years the two brothers reigned in harmony and successfully. They chastised an aggressive spirit manifested by the East Saxons; and they were victors in their encounters with the Britons, especially in a great battle at Brampton in Somersetshire. Even the strength of Penda of Mercia, if not inferior to their own, was not sufficient to subdue them. Cuichelm died in 635, Cynegils in 642.

Coinwald, the son of Ceolwulf, was the next King of Wessex. He reigned thirty years. He waged successful war against the Britons. But in his time the West Saxons bowed to the supremacy of Mercia, first under Penda, and afterwards under Wulphere. On the death of Ceolwulf, his widow, Sexburga, and several members of his family, set up their claim to

* *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 661 et seq. Ethelwerd, *Chron.* lib. i.—iv. passim. Florence. Wigorn. A.D. 661–819. Bede. Lappenberg, *Hist. Eng.* i. 221–238.

be his successor, and for some thirteen years the country was filled with disorder and violence. In 685 Ceadwalla, a descendant of Ceawlin, became king. Ceadwalla. Ceadwalla was not more than twenty-six years of age. But he had made no secret of his pretensions to the throne, had shown himself brave and able, and Ceutwin, the last king, had named him as his successor. His arms were successful against the South Saxons, and against the Jutes of Kent and of the Isle of Wight. But his murder of the two sons of Arvald, a chief who had defended the latter place against him, betrayed his want of magnanimity, and proclaimed him as unscrupulous and cruel. He had formed a friendship in exile with another exile, Wilfrid, sometime Bishop of York. Under the influence of that ecclesiastic he visited Rome, to receive baptism from the hands of the Pope; but, before putting off the baptismal vestments, he was seized with the sickness of which he died seven days afterwards.

If the reign of Ceadwalla was short, that of Ina, Ina. his successor, was long—it was also memorable. It extended to thirty-seven years—from 688 to 726. Ina added the wisdom of the legislator to his genius and courage as a military chief. He, too, ended his days as a religious pilgrim in Rome. His subjects, who appear to have grown impatient of his sway, were now left to reap as they had sown. They had embittered the latter days of a good king, and many long years of disorder and suffering awaited them. The succession to the throne was disputed. Their enemies, especially the Britons, availed themselves of the season of weakness to make injurious inroads upon their territory. The successive reigns of Ethelheard, Cuthred, Sigebyrcht, Cynewulf, and Brittric give us alternations of success and defeat in wars against the Mercians and the Britons, with the too common admixture of deeds of treachery and murder. Of Brittric we only know that he was chosen by the Wessex thanes as successor to Cynewulf; that at first he had

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a competitor in Egbert, who, after fifteen years of exile, was to be his successor; and that he met his death by drinking from a poisoned cup which his queen had prepared for a young nobleman, of whose place in the affections of the king she had become jealous. This queen was Eadburga, a daughter of Offa.

Accession of Egbert.

On the death of Brittric, Egbert was the only surviving descendant of Cerdic, the founder of Wessex. His claim to the throne was undisputed. His years of exile had been to him years of education. Under Charlemagne he became proficient in matters of war and government. The early years of his reign were wisely employed in improving the condition of his people, and in consolidating his power. Subsequently, he extended his conquests into Wales, and the western counties of England. The Britons in those territories had never been so far subdued.* But it was not until more than twenty years after his accession that Egbert ventured to attack the Mercians. The East Anglians urged him strongly to this enterprise. They still remembered the murder of their young king Ethelbert, and longed to see a fitting vengeance descend on the power which they viewed as stained with his blood. The victory of Egbert over Beornwulf of Mercia, in 823, enabled him to assert his sovereignty over the East Saxons, Kent, and East Anglia. Sussex was already a part of Wessex. It only remained that Northumbria should acknowledge his supremacy. In 828 that acknowledgment was extorted without an appeal to the sword. Egbert thus became the eighth Bretwalda, or, as some have designated him, the first king of all England.

Extent of his authority.

Separate states had their kings under Egbert, as under those who had borne the title of Bretwalda before him. But from Cerdic, through Egbert, all the

* 'The same year Egbert laid waste West Wales from eastward to westward.'—*Chron. Sax.* ad an. 813.

dynasties to which England has been subject have claimed to be descended. It is this fact, as much as his high authority, that has made the name of Egbert a landmark in English history.*

England not designed for an Heptarchy.

So we see a century and a half pass away between the death of the seventh Bretwalda and the appearance of the eighth. But the power of Egbert, as we have intimated, was much greater than that of his predecessors, and gave better promise of continuance. With him the title of Bretwalda was a reality. Experience must often have suggested that this subdivision of territory, in a country which left no one state any strong natural means of defence against another, must be inseparable from much inquietude and suffering. Over the space of more than three centuries the same evils had been constantly arising from this source. The history of the Heptarchy had been in fact the history of a struggle for the mastery. In time, the master would be sure to come, and the more advanced civilization of Wessex, together with its closer relation to the Continent, seemed clearly to point to that kingdom as the seat of the future sovereignty. Even the ravages of the Danes, while they tended rather to distract and weaken the several states than to unite them, operated favourably for Wessex, inasmuch as they fell in their greatest weight upon its rivals.

Evils from an elective monarchy.

But, beside the calamities which came from the frequent wars of the different states with each other, there were others, hardly less considerable, arising from the custom which made the monarchy in all those states in a great measure elective. The successor to the vacant throne was generally sought in the family of the deceased king. But the nearest of

* *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 488–827. 'This Egbert,' says the chronicler, 'was the eighth king of the *English nation* who ruled over all the southern provinces, and those which are separated from the north by the Humber,' A.D. 827. Ethelwerd, ii. 9, 10, 12, 13–20. Flor. Wigorn. A.D. 672 et seq. Lappenberg, *Hist. Eng.* i. 251. Mackintosh, *Hist. Eng.*

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kin did not always succeed if not otherwise eligible. If of tender years, or of deficient capacity, the claim of an elder son might give place to that of a younger, or even to that of some collateral branch of the family. Hence, on the death of a king, there was often room for the question, who should succeed him? Even in anticipation of that event, factions were formed, intrigues were rife, and much mischief ensued even when the competitors did not proceed to the length of settling their differences by the sword.

Why the right of succession was unsettled.

But there were strong reasons to be urged in favour of this custom, notwithstanding these grave consequences attendant on it. It should be remembered that this usage, and the ideas and feelings on which it was based, were essentially German. Our rude Saxon ancestors were not men to change their customs suddenly. It would require a considerably advanced stage of civilization to enable them to see the advantages and the possibility of a wider unity, so as to be willing to make the partial sacrifices necessary to secure that more general object. In their circumstances, they were not only likely to adhere to their separate organizations, but it was in the highest degree expedient that the right of succession should be left in this measure open. Everything seemed to depend on the character of the man at the head of their affairs. Hence, when the next in succession was deemed incompetent, he might be superseded by the next, or by some remote kinsman. From these causes, the isolations of the Heptarchy, and the uncertainties of succession, would stand or fall together, and it is hard to say how much longer they would have continued to impede the general interest of the Germanic settlers in Britain, if new influences, supplying new motives, had not come into action.

Tendencies towards unity.

One of these influences we find in the Northman invasions. That event put an end to international feud, if it did not produce unity; and, as we have said, favoured the rising power of Wessex. Another

event, tending to the same result, we see in the introduction of Christianity. In the Christianity embraced by the Anglo-Saxons the Roman element was predominant, and that was in all respects an element of centralization. The civil law of Rome, and the ecclesiastical law which had long been growing up beside it, did everything by means of a strong centralized power. Theodore, a Greek, who came early to the see of Canterbury, was intent on bringing all the churches of the Heptarchy under one scheme of discipline, so as out of them all to constitute in reality one church. Such an ignoring of the civil barriers by which each state was separated from the rest, was a strong anticipation of the time when all those states should constitute one kingdom. Wilfrid, bishop of York, a Saxon, filled the Heptarchy with disputes for more than forty years by his zeal for two objects; first, to secure a strict uniformity in the religious observances of the churches in the different states; and then to connect them all, as branches of one great national church, with the see of Rome. Men so earnest in working out such a policy, declared plainly that the monarchy over these churches which in their mind was the most expedient, was not a sevenfold monarchy, with its endless strifes, but a central power, that should be strong in its great principle of unity. How the impediments in the way of this consummation in the time of Egbert were subsequently removed will appear in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

RISE OF THE ENGLISH MONARCHY—ATHELSTAN.

Position of Wessex, Mercia, and Northumbria, in relation to the Britons and the Scots.

WE have seen, that during several centuries, neither the Britons on the one hand, nor the Picts and Scots on the other, had been sufficiently formidable as antagonists to dispose the Anglo-Saxon states towards any combined course of action from a sense of common danger. But another cause of this indisposition towards union may be found where it has not hitherto been sought—viz., in the geographical positions of the several states of the Heptarchy towards each other. These positions were such as to fence off the whole border-land, both of the Welsh and of the Scots; and each of the great Saxon states bordering on those bad neighbours judged itself competent to deal with its own foes along its own line of territory, and was disposed to content itself with that wardenship as being properly its own. We read nothing accordingly of allied forces as carrying on the wars of the Wessex men westward, or of the Northumbrian men northward. Nor do we find the men of Mercia, whose lands lay between these two, acting at any time with either. The smaller states of the Heptarchy—Kent, Sussex, Essex, and East Anglia—were shut off, as we have shown, both from the Britons and the Scots, by the strong curved belt formed by the three greater states, Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex. No force from Wales or Scotland could reach those lesser states without passing through the territory of these greater states. It was, in consequence, from the three more powerful Saxon states, and not from the Celt, either

in the west or the north, that the four lesser states of the Heptarchy had to apprehend danger.

Novelty of the danger from the Danes.

But a new foe is now about to assail both the greater and the smaller kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon Britain. This foe is one who will seem to become only the more formidable the more he is resisted. He will necessitate a suspension of feuds. He will baffle in no small degree the best concentrated means that can be directed against him. The enemy, in this case, is a maritime enemy, and the sea-board of Britain is of great extent. The points of danger accordingly are many, and widely apart, and seem to require that the means of defence should be widely diffused. The great want of the exigency, accordingly, must be the want of confederation, and united action. But, from the nature of the attacks to be repelled, such action will be extremely difficult to realize. Every local force will be naturally disposed to look to its local interests and dangers. War between one Saxon state and another may come to an end, but combined operation for their common security will still be hard to accomplish. Had the concentration of the sovereignty in Anglo-Saxon Britain been realized earlier, the new invader might have experienced such a reception as would have taught him to seek his booty or his home elsewhere. But the English monarchy had barely come into existence, when it became exposed to dangers that would have tasked its resources to the utmost had it been old and consolidated. The power which was to prostrate everything in France, might well prove formidable to the Saxons in Britain. Of the skill which experience gives in working from a centre, our ancestors of those days knew little; and the intelligence and virtue necessary to subordinate the local to the general, prejudice to patriotism, was, as may be supposed, in a great degree wanting.

First descent of the Danes.

Under the year 787 the *Saxon Chronicle* records the marriage of Brittric, the predecessor of Egbert, to

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Eadburga, the daughter of Offa, and then adds: 'In 'his days first came three ships of Northmen, out of 'Hærethaland.* And the reeve rode to the place, 'and would have driven them to the king's town, be- 'cause he knew not who they were, and they there 'slew him. These were the first ships of Danish 'men which sought the land of the English nation.' The next record of this description was in 794. Under that year we read: 'The Heathens ravaged among 'the Northumbrians, and plundered Egferth's monas- 'tery at Done-mouth; and there one of their leaders 'was slain, and also some of their ships were wrecked 'by a tempest; and many of them were there drowned, 'and some came on shore alive, and they were soon 'slain at the river's mouth.' These are our only notices of the descents of these 'Northmen—Danish 'men'—and 'Heathens,' as they are called, before the accession of Egbert.

Country of the Northmen—aim of their incursions.

The people thus variously designated in the earliest notices of them in our annals, were as diversified in origin as the above terms would suggest. The shores of the Baltic, including Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, with their numerous islands, formed the country from which they came. What the Saxons had been in the sixth century, the Danes had become, in nearly all respects, in the ninth century—pirates; but pirates capable of prosecuting their schemes of war and plunder upon a large scale, on the land or on the deep. After the first few experiments, their object in visiting Britain appears to have been to secure a settlement in the country, but a settlement which they seem to have contemplated as to be made, not so much by subduing the natives, as by destroying them.

Causes of this movement.

We know not the causes which prompted the first

* Lappenberg says that, by Hærethaland we are, probably, to 'understand Hördeland in Norway, famed for its sea-kings, and, which at a later period sent forth the unyielding discoverers of Iceland.'—*Hist.* ii. 12.

great Saxon movement. The increase of numbers, the pressure of new tribes migrating westward, rival leaderships and convulsions—any, or all of these circumstances, might have contributed to give the stream of races the direction then taken by them. But we are not left so much in uncertainty in regard to the causes which disposed the Northmen to direct their course towards Britain, in preference to seeking a settlement on shores nearer to their own. The conquests of Charlemagne in Germany, and the sternness with which he insisted that all subdued by him to the condition of subjects, should profess themselves Christians, opposed a formidable barrier to migration southward. A few years only had intervened since the achievements of Charlemagne in Germany, when these invaders begin to make their appearance in this country. It should be stated, also, that our own aristocratic law of primogeniture was rigorously enforced among those northern hordes. The eldest son inherited the property of the father. The younger sons were left to make acquisitions for themselves by such means as should appear to them expedient. Hence the Corsair life so commonly assumed among that people, and the ease with which a chief of capacity and daring could attract followers to his standard. The terrible scourge which came thus into action, passed along the shores of Flanders, Holland, France, and Ireland, and fell with memorable effect on Britain.*

In 832 the Danes appeared in the Thames, ravaged the Isle of Sheppey, and retired unmolested with their spoil. In the year following, an armament of five-and-thirty vessels entered the Dart, and Egbert, after a stubborn engagement, was compelled to leave the enemy master of the field. Two years later, another force landed in Cornwall, and prevailed on some of the

* Mallet's *Northern Antiquities*. Lappenberg, ii. 10–18, and note by Thorpe. Turner's *Anglo-Saxons*, i. book iv. c. 1, 2.

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Cornish Britons to join their ranks. But in the next battle victory was on the side of the Saxons. Egbert died the following year.*

Intentions of the Danes.

It was now evident that the object of the Danes was to secure a permanent footing in the country, and not simply to possess themselves of booty. Measures were taken to guard the coast more effectually. Military officers were stationed from place to place, that on the approach of an enemy the armed men of the district might be assembled to resist a landing. In the first year of Ethelwulf, who succeeded his father Egbert, three separate armaments appeared off the coast of Britain. The king opposed himself to one of these, but with what success is unknown. The force which landed at Southampton was defeated by the men of Hampshire; but that which landed at Portland prevailed against the men of Dorset. The army which made its appearance in Lincolnshire in 838 was more powerful than any that had preceded it. The men who encountered the invaders perished by the sword or in the marshes; and the enemy ravaged the country at pleasure from the Humber to the Thames. The next year battles were fought, with great loss of life, at Canterbury, Rochester, and near London.

In 840 Ethelwulf led his men against a force which had landed from thirty-five ships, but was defeated. The next four years in the *Saxon Chronicle* are blank; but under the year 851 we find the following record: 'This year, Ceorl, the ealdorman, with the men of 'Devonshire, fought against the heathen men at 'Wicanbeorg, and there made great slaughter, and 'got the victory. And the same year king Athelstan, 'and Ealchere the ealdorman, fought on shipboard, 'and slew a great number of the enemy at Sandwich 'in Kent, and took nine ships, and put the others to 'flight; and *the heathen men remained for the first time*

* *Chron. Sax.* ad an. 832–836.

'*over the winter in Thanet.* And the same year came '*three hundred and fifty ships* to the mouth of the 'Thames, and the crews landed and took Canterbury 'and London by storm, and put to flight Beorhtwulf, 'king of the Mercians, with his army, and then went 'south over the Thame into Surry; and there king 'Ethelwulf and his son Ethelbald, with the army of 'the West Saxons, fought against them at Aclea '[Ockley], and there made the greatest slaughter 'among the heathen army that we have heard reported 'to the present day.'

But these partial successes did not free the country from the Northmen. In 853 there was destructive warfare in Thanet between the 'heathen men' on the one side, and the men of Kent and Sussex on the other; and under the year 855 we find the following significant entry in the *Chronicle* above cited: 'This 'year the heathen men for the first time remained 'over the winter in Sheppey; and the same year 'King Ethelwulf gave by charter the tenth of his 'land throughout the kingdom for the glory of God 'and his own eternal salvation. And the same year '*he went to Rome in great state, and dwelt there twelve* '*months*, and then returned homewards.' The reader will probably think that the king who could be absent from his domain for such a space of time, at such a season, and on such an errand, was not inaptly described by Malmesbury, as a man more fitted to wear a cowl, than to wield a sceptre.* Ethelwulf died two years after his return from Rome.

Ethelbald and Ethelbert, sons of Ethelwulf, had distinguished themselves in the resistance made to the Danes, and had given an appearance of vigour to the reign of their father which the king himself could

* Dr. Lingard (*Hist.* i. 211 et seq.) takes exception to this censure of Malmesbury, and to soften the reproach cast upon Ethelwulf, and on the superstitious influences which made him what he was, the historian has represented the danger from the Northmen in this reign as much less than we know it to have been.—*Chron. Sax.* Asser, *Vita Alfred.*

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never have imparted to it. But history gives us no account of the military achievements of these princes during the short period of their sovereignty. Ethelbald reigned two years only; Ethelbert died in 865, having reigned five years. Ethelbert was succeeded by Ethelred, the third of the sons of Ethelwulf.

Accession of Ethelred, brother of Alfred.

It is from the accession of Ethelred to the throne of Wessex, at a time when so much was expected from Wessex by the other states, that we have to date the most terrible successes and devastations of the Northmen. The struggle now becomes national. The question now to be decided is, whether the Dane or the Saxon is to be the future possessor of England. From the armaments of the invader, it is clear that the object of his enterprise is thus large. The Saxons were now made to feel that the danger affected all, and could be resisted only by a union embracing all. But the history of the ravages which become so wide-spread from this time has some antecedents that should be mentioned.

Story of Ragnar Lodbrog.

In the last year of Ethelbert the Danes made a descent on Northumbria. That kingdom had assumed a sort of independence since the death of Egbert; and at this time two chiefs, Osbert and Ella, had filled it with dissensions, as competitors for rule. Ella at once turned his arms against the Northmen, defeated them, and made their leader prisoner. It proved that these depredators were only a remnant of a much larger gathering, whose point of destination had been the coast of Britain. But many vessels had been wrecked; and the chief who had been captured, was found to be no other than Ragnar Lodbrog, a man whose deeds had made his name the terror of every coast from the Baltic to Ireland. Twenty years since he had ascended the Seine, made himself master of Paris, and surrendered it to the Franks on condition of receiving 7000 pounds of silver as the price of its ransom. Ella doomed the veteran marauder to death. He was cast into a dungeon of venomous snakes; and

the poetry of his people describes him as consoling himself in his suffering by predicting that the 'cubs'—meaning his sons—would take good recompence for the loss of the 'boar.'*

Enterprise of Inguar and Ubbo.

This was in 865. In the next year Inguar and Ubbo, sons of Ragnar, found themselves at the head of twenty thousand men, who were ready to share the fortunes of their chiefs, and to avenge the fate of their father. The armament appears to have been driven past the coast of Northumbria by unfavourable winds. But a landing was secured without opposition on the neighbour coast of East Anglia. This army, great as it may seem, was not deemed equal to the object contemplated. The winter of 866–7 was in great part occupied in securing reinforcements, in collecting horses for cavalry, and in attempting to sow disunion among the natives.

In February, the invaders began their march towards Northumbria, and in a fortnight they had fixed their head-quarters in York. Osbert and Ella, laying aside their differences, joined in an attack upon the enemy in the neighbourhood of that city. The onset was in favour of the assailants; but in the fight within the city the courage of the Northmen became desperate, Osbert and the most distinguished of his followers were slain, and it was the fate of Ella to fall alive into the hands of the sons of Ragnar. His ribs were severed, his lungs were torn through the crevice thus made, and salt was thrown on the wounds. This kind of death, horrible as it may seem, was not uncommon among the Northmen.

From that day England north of the Humber may be said to have been subdued. An army was stationed at York to secure the possession, and to protect in some measure the industry of the country; while a second, and a much larger army, directed its way southward.

*Asser, *Vita Alf.* *Chron. Sax.* Saxo Grammat. 176. Turner's *Anglo-Saxons*, book iv. c. 3.

The check at Nottingham.

But at Nottingham the progress of this force was checked. The army opposed to it was one of great strength. It was led by the king of Mercia, and by Ethelred and his brother Alfred, from Wessex. The Northmen shrank from the hazard of an engagement, and surrendered the place on condition of being allowed to retrace their steps northward. The Danes from Nottingham then rejoined their countrymen at York.*

But the check thus given to the enemy was transient. The three years which followed before the accession of Alfred to the throne of Wessex, were years of memorable calamity to the people of Saxon Britain. Inguar, renowned for his far-seeing craft, and Ubbo, no less renowned for his ferocious bravery, led their forces, without opposition, through Mercia into East Anglia. Another horde of adventurers, in the meantime, landed at Lindsey in Lincolnshire, who possessed themselves of the rich monastery of Bardeney, plundered it, razed it to the ground, and put all the inmates to the sword.†

Battle of Kesteven.

In the absence of Burhed, the king of Mercia, who chose to be otherwise employed, Algar, a young ealdorman, celebrated for his patriotism and courage, is said to have summoned the bolder men of the marshes to his standard. Many obeyed his call, even monks are described as exchanging the cowl for the helmet, and as resolved to defend their Christian homes to the last against the merciless pagans. Tolius, a lay brother of high military reputation, led the contingent of this description from the Abbey of Croyland. The chivalrous men thus brought together faced the enemy at a place called Kesteven. In the desperate encounter on that spot three Danish kings were slain, and Algar and his followers chased the Danes to the entrance of their camp. Night then

* *Chron. Sax.* Asser. Snorre, 108. Pet. Olaus, 111.
† *Sax. Chron.* Asser.

came on. In the morning came the alarming tidings that five kings and five jarls had reached the Danish camp during the night. Three-fourths of Algar's men now deemed their condition hopeless, and fled. But the small band left took the sacrament from the ecclesiastics, now their companions in arms, and resolved to oppose themselves to the last to the odds against them.

The Danes buried their slaughtered kings, and then sharpened their weapons for the revenge to follow. But the wings and centre of the Saxons were found to be immoveable. So well had they chosen their position, and such was their steady bravery, that through the whole day they defended themselves against showers of arrows, and the heavy swords of their assailants. Towards evening the Danes feigned a retreat. Algar had cautioned his men against this stratagem. But it was in vain. They descended in chase of the foe—and then began the carnage. For now they were encompassed by numbers, and the Saxons fell on every side. Algar and Tolius, indeed, with a few faithful adherents, regained the hill-side, and there kept the enemy at bay, until, covered with wounds, their bodies were added to the heaps of the slain. The few youths who gave report of this tragedy to the monks of Croyland, were the only survivors.

Destructive March of the Danes.

From that battle-field the 'heathen army' might be tracked by the conflagrations which marked its way. The wealthy abbeys of Croyland and Medeshamstede were destroyed, and no lives that could be reached were spared. The head of the abbot of Croyland was struck off on the steps of the altar. In storming Medeshamstede a son of Ragnar was wounded; and, to avenge it, Ubbo, his brother, is said to have inflicted the death-wound on the abbot and eighty monks with his own hand. Huntingdon and Ely shared the fate of the places above named. The nuns of Ely, who were many of them from

wealthy and noble families, suffered indignities worse than death. Thetford was the next place taken, and that also was given to the flames. The good king Edmund opposed them in vain, and met a martyr's death at their hands. The name of St. Edmund stands high in the Roman calendar in after ages. East Anglia now ceased to be a Christian state. The pagan leader Guthorm claimed it as his own. Mercia had shown nothing of its ancient prowess in this hour of trial. It rested with the West Saxons to determine the race and the faith that should obtain in the future of Britain.*

Martyrdom of King Edmund.

The East-Anglian Danes invade Wessex.

We have said that the Northmen now invaded Britain in such numbers as to show that their object was not so much transient plunder as a settlement. But no country could be productive under such masters. With them, to possess was to impoverish. Moreover, their restless and roving habits, after a short interval of quiet, often became too strong to be controlled by their new resolutions. Nor was it possible that they should be without some sense of danger, so long as a large portion of the country remained in the hands of a people who might possibly become strong, and who would not fail to be intensely disposed to use their strength in avenging the wrongs of the past. Some of these barbarian hordes, accordingly, having secured their booty, returned for a season to their homes; while others, who might have been expected to settle in the acquisitions they had

* That the Danes marched over the territory above named, and left upon it the terrible traces of their presence, we learn from the *Saxon Chronicle*, Asser, and other sources. But for the particulars concerning Algar, and the battle of Kesteven, we are indebted to the more doubtful authority of the history attributed to Ingulf. I am disposed, however, on many grounds, rather to credit than distrust that narrative in this instance. It describes nothing which is not characteristic of the historical personages named, and of the struggle generally between the belligerents. In this case there was nothing to be gained by invention, and the substance of the narrative is certainly truthful.

made, are found seeking new excitement in new adventures.

Under such influences, in the early part of the year 871, a large division of the 'heathen army' in East Anglia directed their course towards the lands of the West Saxons. This army was led by the two kings Bagseg and Halfdene, by Guthorm, by two distinguished chiefs named Sidroc, and by the jarls—or earls—Osbearn, Frene, and Harald. They ascended the Thames in their ships, and sending off detachments in different directions, overran the coast-lands and the south provinces of the West Saxon territory in great multitudes. The main division penetrated as far as Reading, in Berkshire, and made themselves masters of that place, as a favourable point from which to convey their plunder by means of the river to the sea.

The ealdorman Ethelwulf.

On the third day after their arrival, a part of this division mounted their horses, and sallied forth into the country in search of spoil. The other part remained in the town, and occupied themselves in strengthening its fortifications. The men of Wessex had not expected such visitors at so early a season. But Ethelwulf, an ealdorman of that district, called all possessed of arms in his neighbourhood together, and determined to attack the marauders before they should rejoin their confederates at Reading. He met them at a place called Englafield. In the resolute encounter which followed, one of the jarls was slain, and the rest were put to flight.*

Battle of Reading.

Four days later, king Ethelred and his brother Alfred appeared before the walls of Reading. The Danes were slow to accept the challenge thus given to them. But while the Saxons were busy in forming an encampment, the enemy rushed forth upon them, and took them by surprise. The battle which ensued was obstinate. The prospect of victory changed for some time from side to side. In the end the heathen

* *Chron. Sax.* 871. Asser, *Vit. Alf.*

men prevailed, and the body of the brave ealdorman Ethelwulf was among those who had fallen.*

Battle of Ashdune.

Enough, however, had taken place to show that the men of Wessex were likely to furnish much graver employment to their enemies than had been imposed upon them in the other Saxon states.† Four days only had passed when Ethelred and Alfred were again prepared to take the field. Their place of meeting was Ashdune (or Aston) in Berkshire. The battle on that spot was a real trial of strength. The Danes felt that it became them to avail themselves of every possible advantage. The position they had taken was on an eminence, crowned with a short thick underwood, from which, as a kind of breastwork, it would be easy to gall the Saxons in attempting to reach the summit. Alfred was early at the foot of the hill, and prompt in his preparations for the fray. But Ethelred was at mass, and though apprised that the moment for action had come, refused to move until the last word should be pronounced by the priest. The king should have given the order for battle, but Alfred, having waited until waiting longer became perilous, raised the signal, and speedily the weapons of his followers were in full play upon the enemy. The fight became stubborn—destructive—hand to hand. Ethelred soon joined his division, and charged boldly on the men under the kings Bagseg and Halfdene. Brave deeds were done by the Northmen on that day, but braver by the Saxons. At length the former began to waver, the Saxons rushed on with new courage, and the slaughter which ensued is described by ancient writers as the greatest England had ever witnessed. Ethelred slew the king Bagseg with his own hand. Among the dead were the two Sidrocs, the three jarls Osbearn, Frene, and Harald, with many more who were accounted the flower and hope of the Northmen. The Saxons chased the fugi-

* *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 871. Asser, *Vita Alf.* † Ibid.

tives from Aston to Reading, strewing the whole way with the slain.*

But the calamity of these times was, that to sweep off these barbarians on any scale seemed to be to little purpose. The void of to-day was filled up with swarms of new-comers to-morrow. The hive which sent them forth seemed to be inexhaustible. Thus, within a few weeks after the battle of Ashdune, came another at Basing in Hampshire, and another at Merton, near to Ashdune. In these engagements the West Saxons acquitted themselves with their wonted ability and courage; but many of the bravest among them fell, and the enemy, though in neither case a victor, in both cases, to use the language of the old chronicle, 'kept the place of carnage.' It was at this juncture of affairs that Ethelred breathed his last—whether from wounds or natural causes is uncertain. His conduct on the whole had been such as to entitle him to the esteem and affection of his subjects. It is in such circumstances that Alfred, since known as the 'great,' comes to the possession of kingly power.†

Accession of Alfred.

The character and the reign of Alfred have many claims to our attention. Our concern in this place is simply with the military events of his career, and their result. The sons of Ethelred were children; and there was much in the past, and everything in the present, to prepare men for seeing in Alfred the natural successor to the throne.

Increased power of the Danes.

In place of the court pageants usual on an accession, the scenes awaiting the new king were such as menaced everything most valued by himself and his subjects. The strife before them was deadly, its issue to the last degree doubtful. Soon after the battle of Merton, strong reinforcements joined the army at Reading. Bolder incursions were made into the neighbouring country. Weeks passed, and Alfred

* Asser, A.D. 871. *Chron. Sax.*

† Asser, 21–24. *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 871. Flor. Wigorn.

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found it impossible to raise an army capable of meeting such an enemy. His loss from the odds opposed to him at Wilton added to the discouragement of his subjects, and to the sense of weakness which weighed at this time on his own spirit. In twelve months, eight regular engagements had taken place, besides almost incessant skirmishing. Great had been the losses of the Northmen, but great also had been the losses of the king. In the meanwhile Alfred's supplies of men, expert in the use of the weapons of war, did not keep pace with those of his enemies; nor was he at liberty to resort to plunder to replenish his exchequer. The issue was, that in the first year of his reign he consented, along with his thanes, to buy off the invaders. But it soon became known that all such compacts with that people were worse than useless. The Mercians had tried the expedient. It impoverished them without giving them the promised security. In 874 that once powerful kingdom ceased to exist. In that year, Burhed, its last king, sought an asylum in Rome. One Ceolwulf was set up by the Danes in his stead, but was used, as the Romans often used such men, as a tool to bear the odium of their own extortions. Many of the Danes now settled in that country, and gave names to the localities of their choice which have descended to our times.*

From 875 to 878 the gloom thickened over Anglo-Saxon Britain. The old districts being exhausted, the pirate hordes began the exploring of new ground. A second effort was made to bribe them to a distance, and to bind them by special means to their promise; but the same perfidy followed. They possessed themselves of Wareham and Exeter, as places of strength, and places whence they might readily descend to the sea with such spoil as they should obtain.

Alfred raises a fleet.

During these troubled years, however, the naval history of England may be said to have commenced.

* *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 871–874. Asser, 24–26.

Alfred built or collected a number of ships, manned them with brave seamen, and by this means destroyed the greater part of a Danish fleet, which had been driven by foul weather on the coast of Dorset. This was in 877. The armament thus scattered or annilfilated, was destined for the relief of Exeter. The besieged, seeing no chance of succour, capitulated, giving hostages to abstain from further hostilities in Wessex. But, reaching Gloucester, they renewed the work of pillage and destruction. The impoverished condition to which they had reduced all the Saxon kingdoms, prompted the banditti which now covered the land, to explore the barren homes of the Welsh, and of the Picts and Scots. But that proved a bootless errand. The last effort made at this crisis against these sons of the destroyer, was at Kynwith, where a feeble garrison resisted a rigorous siege, and surprising the besiegers in a sally, destroyed more than a thousand of them. And now the time had come in which the high spirit of the Saxon race appeared to have forsaken them. Many fled with such moveables as they could take with them to other countries; the rest seem to have learned to look on their unhappy condition as a destiny, and to submit.*

The lowest stage of disorder and depression.

Popular feeling is ever liable to these alternations. Its excesses in elevation and depression come from the same cause. To yield to the pressure of the many, whether for good or evil, is natural to man. Where all seem to obey, it is hard for the individual to resist. But there are some noble natures to whom such self-sustaining power is given, and who can hope where hope seems to have forsaken all beside. Alfred the king was one of these. He might have gathered his staff together, and have found high military service in other lands; or he might have journeyed as a pilgrim to that old Rome upon whose shrines he had gazed in his boyhood. In that case, what would have

* *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 873–877. Asser, 24–29.

been the future of English history? The old northern paganism—which the Saxon had abandoned—would have again become ascendant. The religion of the Cross would probably have ceased. The barbaric customs of Scandinavia would have found a new home in Britain. The near prospect of that powerful English monarchy, towards which so many influences had seemed to be converging, would have vanished. This island might have become, and have long continued, the great rendezvous of sea-kings—the base from which they would have gone forth to spread their devastations, superstitions, and barbarisms over the fairest provinces of Europe.

Alfred could believe that this was not to be. He could have faith in God. To prevent such calamity, he could watch his last watch, offer his last prayer, do his last possible deed. It is clear that he must have thought it possible that even from this state of things there might be a return, and that it behoved him to be vigilant, patient, and ready. The selfish did not rule in this man—but the humane, the patriotic, the religious; and he has his reward. The seeds of the coming England were in that great heart; though its ground-spring of action, we can readily suppose, was a simple sense of duty.

Alfred leaves his retreat.

During the winter of 877-8 the king concealed himself among the woods and lowlands of Somersetshire. Miserable was the shelter there found, and difficult often was it to obtain the poorest means of subsistence for himself and his few faithful followers. But with the new life of the spring-time came new hope to the fugitives. We meddle not now with the traditionary or the doubtful. Suffice it to say, that in the spring of 878 Alfred quitted his retreat at Athelney, and called the faithful men of the district to his standard, and that he soon found himself surrounded by a brave and loyal host, who gazed upon their king as upon one who had been dead and was alive again. Some weeks passed in collecting greater numbers, in severe military exer-

cises, and in some successful skirmishing. Wilts and Hants, as well as Somerset, sent their supplies of men and means.

Battle of Ethadune.

The head-quarters of the Danes was at Chippenham. Alfred marched in that direction. But the place where the two armies met was Ethadune, probably Edington, near Westbury, in Wiltshire. The White Horse on the side of Edington Hill, seen at different points to a distance of many miles across the vale beneath, is still recognised by the traveller as commemorative of the death-struggle which once raged on that eminence. The conflict was desperate on the part of the Danes, but decisive on the side of the Saxons. The Northmen were chased from that high border of Salisbury Plain, down the slope towards Chippenham, and no quarter was given. Chippenham itself was besieged, and after fourteen days was compelled to capitulate. The veteran Guthorm, the commander of the Danes in that place, some weeks later, professed himself a Christian. His chiefs for the most part followed his example. Alfred himself stood sponsor for his old enemy, and, though the passions of the past returned upon him at times with great force, and rendered him still in some degree unfaithful to the trust reposed in him, Guthorm ended his days in comparative tranquillity, as the possessor of East Anglia, and still adhering to his new faith. Before his decease, the heathenism he had introduced had nearly disappeared.*

Alfred's treaty with Guthorm.

Alfred deemed it wise to favour the disposition of the Danes to remain in the land, stipulating, however, as the condition, that they should conform themselves to the order and habits of settled and civilized communities. He appears to have thought that men so acquiring a home in the country, would come by degrees to have their own motives for resisting further invasion; and that mixing gradually

* *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 878. Asser, 31 et seq.

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with the Saxons, they would contribute to the stability of the throne, and to the future unity and progress of the nation. The mischiefs of this policy were great, but possibly those of a contrary course would have been greater.

Effects of the wars with the Danes.

We have seen that the invasions of the Northmen began to be formidable in the reign of Egbert. The battle of Ethadune brought eighty years of war and destruction to a temporary close.* Great was the check given to all things conducive to social progress by these devastations. The previous wars of the Heptarchy, frequent and pregnant with evil as they were, had not been inconsistent with signs of improvement, both in social and religious life. But on all this the Danish invasions came as the hand of a destroyer. One good, however, came out of this wide march of evil. The reconstruction of the Heptarchy was impossible. Its machinery had been so crushed, its elements had been so consumed, that no one could hope to succeed in attempting to replace it, or anything resembling it. Northumbria, partly from the ravages of the Northmen, and partly from its own dissensions, had almost ceased to be a kingdom. The same was still more true of Mercia. Wessex, with its race of Cerdic represented in Alfred, became the destined centre of unity for the coming time. The natural course of the smaller eastern states was, that they should avail themselves of the safety which the weak may derive from their friendly relations to the strong.

Alfred's precautions.

The years of peace which Alfred had won by successful war, were sedulously and wisely employed in adding to the military strength of his dominions. Mercia he had assigned to the able oversight of the ealdorman Ethelred, his son-in-law. The Welsh princes readily acknowledged his authority; and the

* The arms of the Northmen were now turned mainly towards France. *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 881–887.

East Anglian and Northumbrian Danes were, in effect, if not in form, subject to it.*

The invasion under Hastings.

Nothing less than the precaution thus taken could have saved the kingdom from the hands of the Northmen towards the close of the reign of Alfred. Hastings, a Danish chief who had traversed Gaul and other countries almost at pleasure during the last forty years, resolved in 893 to attempt the establishment of a kingdom for himself in Britain. His armaments were commensurate with his design. One fleet of eighty ships, conducted by Hastings himself, ascended the Swale, and took up its position on the northern coast of Kent; the other, consisting of two hundred and fifty ships, landed its warriors on the south coast, near the point now known as Romney Marsh. Alfred took possession of a high ground between these opposite points, and brought so much sagacity to his plans, that the movements of his antagonists, expert and treacherous as they proved, were thoroughly counter-worked. Baffled and scattered, they succeeded in making their devastations visible in widely distant parts of the island; but their great scheme, after three years of toil, frustration, and loss, ended in failure. The Northumbrian and East Anglian Danes became so far the partisans of Hastings as to suggest the expediency of measures that should secure a less doubtful allegiance from that quarter. Guthorm was now dead; and Hastings subsequently found his home in the city of Chartres, the adjacent territory being ceded to him, on certain feudal conditions, by Charles the Simple.†

Saxons better organized than the Danes.

In England, the Danes were now the dangerous element. Not a few of them had learnt to live peaceably; but it was evident that their old propensities were so strong in others as to dispose them to join almost any standard which promised them a greater measure

* Asser, 36 et seq. *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 886, 894.

† *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 894, 895. Asser. Ethelwerd. Flor. Wigorn. ad an. 893, 894.

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of independence and licence. With regard to organization and government, however, the Danes were in the ninth century very much what the Saxons had been in the fifth and sixth centuries. Experience had made them familiar with the action of small confederacies. Combined action on a large scale they had to learn as time and circumstances only could teach them. On this material point the education of the Anglo-Saxons, as forced upon them by the events of the last four centuries, gave them a decided advantage.

Power of Edward and of Athelstan.

Under Edward, the son and successor of Alfred, the Anglo-Saxons availed themselves of this advantage with much effect. Before his death in 924, Edward had fully subdued the disaffected in the East-Anglian states and in Northumbria, had annexed Mercia formally to Wessex, and was the acknowledged sovereign of a larger territory than had owned the authority of the most fortunate of his predecessors.* But if the authority of Edward exceeded that of the most potent among his precursors, the authority of Athelstan, who next ascended the throne of Cerdic, was still more weighty and extended. He asserted his sovereignty, and with success, over Northumbria. He taught the Britons of Wales and Cornwall the expediency of submission. Even the king of Scotland was among his dependents.

Invasion under Anlaff.

Great, however, as was this power of Athelstan, a crisis came in which he needed all his resources. He had given his daughter Editha in marriage to a Northman named Sightric, who had come to be possessed of a kind of royalty over Northumbria. Sightric died within a year after his marriage and his baptism. Athelstan then seized on Northumbria in right of his daughter. But Anlaff, one of the sons of Sightric, was not disposed to submit to this summary proceeding. He fled before the power of Athelstan at the

* *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 901–924. Ingulph. 28.

time. But about ten years later he appeared in the Humber as the commander of a fleet consisting of more than six hundred vessels. The warriors in this confederation were mostly sea-kings and their followers, but ultimately the army included many Northumbrian Danes, with larger contingents from the Scots and the Britons.

Battle of Brunanburgh.

The two armies met at Brunanburgh in Northumbria. The numbers were greater than had been opposed to each other on the same field in British history since the issue of the struggle between the Celts and the Romans. The battle of Brunanburgh raged from morning until evening; but victory was with the Saxons. Anlaff escaped. Among the dead were five sea-kings and seven jarls, besides a son of the king of Scotland. The issue of that day made Athelstan truly 'King of England.' Egbert, and even Alfred and Edward, ruled England as kings of Wessex. But the monarchy of Cerdic now absorbed every other within the limits of the country to which the name of England has since been given.*

Athelstan king of all England.

* *Chron. Sax.* Malms. *de Reg.* lib. ii. 26.

CHAPTER V.

RISE OF THE DANISH MONARCHY.

Edmund succeeds Athelstan —Danish insurrection.

ATHELSTAN was succeeded by his half-brother Edmund, then about eighteen years of age. Edmund had acquired reputation as a soldier at Brunanburgh. But the fear which the genius of Athelstan had inspired having passed away, the Danes of Northumbria invited Anlaff to try his fortune anew in England. The Danes of Mercia, and many in East Anglia, it is said, joined in the revolt. Even Wulfstan, the archbishop of York, played the traitor. Edmund encountered the enemy at Tamworth. The issue there was in favour of the insurgents. The scale, however, soon turned to the other side. The king besieged the rebels in Leicester; and so menacing were his approaches, that Anlaff and Wulfstan made their escape by night. The end was, that through the intervention of Odo, archbishop of Canterbury, himself the son of a Dane who had fought against Alfred, Anlaff was permitted to retain the sovereignty of the territory north of the Watling Street, and Edmund was reconciled to Wulfstan. But Anlaff died soon afterwards; and the two chiefs, Anlaff and Regnald, who were allowed to divide his territory between them, were finally deprived of their sovereignty by Edmund, who declared himself master of Northumbria. The policy and the arms of Edmund were at length equally successful in the affairs of Wales and Scotland.*

Edmund had reigned six years only when he fell

* *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 941–946. Flor. Wigorn. ad an. 924 et seq. Ethelwerd, chap. vi. Malms. *de Reg.* lib. ii. c. 7.

by the dagger of Leof, an outlaw, during a religious festival at Pucklechurch in Gloucestershire. He left two sons; but they were young children, and the Witan chose Edred his brother to be king. Edred was crowned by Archbishop Odo at Kingston. As usual, the first trouble of the new sovereign came from the Danes of the northern counties. The nine years of his reign were almost wholly occupied in quelling insurrection and faction in that part of his dominions. But from this time we may date the final subjection of Northumbria. The death of Edred was the result of a disease from which he had suffered so long and so greatly, that the successes of his reign were attributed mainly to the able services of the notorious Dunstan, and to the wisdom of Turketul, the accredited minister of his affairs.*

Edred—continued inquietude from the Northumbrian Danes.

Edwy, the eldest son of Edmund, now became king. His reign is chiefly remarkable from the feud between him and the ecclesiastics of his time, especially with Dunstan. But these circumstances belong to the religious history of this period. It must suffice to say in this place, that a reign of two short years in the history of this unhappy prince, was more than enough to show that the time had come in which the civil power attempting to sustain itself in independence of the ecclesiastical, would need to be a power exercised with no ordinary firmness and sagacity.†

Edwy—Priestly power.

Before the death of Edwy, Edgar, his younger brother, had taken possession of Mercia. He now became king, and is designated in history as 'the 'peaceful.' Not that he was incapable of military enterprise, nor that his reign passed away without an unsheathing of the sword. But Edgar, though dissolute enough in his habits, was careful to profit

Edgar—an interval of rest.

* *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 946 et seq. Florence Wigorn. ad an. 955-958. Malms. *de Reg.* lib. ii. c. 7.

† For the Romanist' version of the quarrel between Edwy and St. Dunstan see Dr. Lingard; for a more faithful version of the affair see Lappenberg.

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by the experience of his brother, and to make friends of the ecclesiastics. He did much also to conciliate the foreign settlers in Britain, by ceding to them privileges in accordance with their national usages. Above all, he raised a powerful navy to guard the shores of his dominions. His ships, divided into several armaments, went forth every spring to protect the coast against further descents from the vessels of the Northmen. The king himself sailed from year to year with them. By this time the most famous of the sea-kings had found settlements in various countries. The north was more quiet than it had been for some generations past. And such adventurers as might be disposed towards new enterprises were taught by these signs of preparation to avoid the shores of Britain. Edgar was a man of intelligence and firmness, but as he died when not more than thirty years of age, these measures warrant us in supposing that he was influenced in his policy by heads of more experience than his own. In the ballad literature of the time he was lauded as the most powerful king that England had known.*

Edward the Martyr.

Edgar left two sons, Edward and Ethelred; the first thirteen years of age, the second seven. Factions, civil and ecclesiastical, embroiled the commencement of the reign of Edward 'the Martyr.' In this fact, together with his murder, at the bidding of his stepmother Elfrida, while refreshing himself on a hunting excursion at her castle-gate, we possess nearly all we know concerning this ill-fated prince. Corfe Castle became memorable from this deed. Edward was then in the eighteenth year of his age, and the third of his reign.†

Ethelred the Unready.

Ethelred, the son of Elfrida, was now the only re-

* *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 957 et seq. Florence Wigorn. ad an. 960–975. Malms. *de Reg.* lib. ii. c. 8. There is much in the reign of Edgar that seems to confirm the account in Ingulf of the high capacity and influence of Turketul.

† *Chron. Sax.* Malms. *de Reg.* lib. ii. c. 9.

maining prince of the blood. The fact that he was the son of the woman who had murdered his predecessor was felt as a difficulty. But it was not deemed a sufficient ground for precluding him from the throne at the hazard of a civil war. The reign which had thus commenced in crime, is memorable for its shame and its disasters. If man could overlook blood-guiltiness, Providence seemed not so to do. The thirty-eight years during which Ethelred was king, are more full of suffering and humiliation than the like interval in any other period of English history.

The Northmen begin to descend anew on the coast, in greater or smaller numbers, from year to year. After a while, no province, from the Land's End to the Orkneys, or from East Anglia to St. Davids, is found to be secure from their approach. Everywhere they repeat the plunder, the devastation, and the merciless destruction of human life, which had marked the path of their precursors two centuries since. In the meanwhile attempts to concentrate the force of the country for its common safety are so feebly prosecuted, and are so easily frustrated by local factions and selfish considerations, that failure follows upon failure in sickening succession. Instances of individual or local courage and self-devotion occur, but end in nothing, from the want of such a central influence as might secure unity by inspiring confidence. The command of such forces as were raised, was entrusted, for the most part, to men who, from their Danish origin, their Danish connexions, or other causes, betray, one after another, the confidence reposed in them; and, strange to say, are seen rising to new responsibilities only to repeat their old treasons. Cruel to the weak, Ethelred was a craven before the strong. Seasons that should have been employed in collecting and marshalling the strength of his kingdom, were surrendered to selfish and sensuous indulgence. Too ready was he to believe that the enemy with whom he had to do was one who might be bribed to seek other quarters, or at

least into forbearance and quiet as settlers. Large sums were collected for this purpose, from time to time; but the oaths exacted from the men who received them were forgotten almost as soon as uttered. By this wretched policy Ethelred became a tool in the hands of the enemy, by whose means the plunder of his own subjects was made more easy and effectual than would otherwise have been possible.

Massacre of the Danes.

Twenty-four years had passed since the accession of Ethelred, and the greater part of those years marked by the circumstances above mentioned, when the king resolved on a deed which has covered him with infamy, and which, as might have been foreseen, was to bring heavy retribution in its train. It was no secret that the Saxons regarded the Danes resident among them with distrust and hatred. The relation of these people to the common enemy; and still more the fact that they had generally shown themselves much more disposed to favour than to repel the invaders, had given a special intensity to the feeling ordinarily separating race from race.* Ethelred, it would seem, had ceased to expect fidelity from this class of his subjects; and, to save himself from the machinations of traitors within the camp, he determined that an attempt should be made utterly to destroy them.

In the spring of the year 1002 secret orders were issued, that on the approaching religious festival in honour of St. Brice, the Saxons should fall unawares upon the Danes, and put them to death. The orders were kept secret; and on the appointed day the massacre ensued, the fury of the populace in many places adding not a little cruelty to the work of destruction. It is supposed that the Danes must have numbered at this time nearly a third of the inhabitants of England. We may be sure, therefore, that this destruction was rather local than general. It has been

* Ulfkytel, the ruler of East Anglia, was the only Dane who, in the language of Malmesbury, 'resisted the invaders with any degree of spirit,' in the reign of Ethelred.—*De Reg.* lib. ii. c. 10.

thought that the Danes whose removal was meditated, were those only who, as retainers to the nobles, wore arms, and who had so often turned the arms entrusted to them to traitorous uses. But if such was the limit of the project, in execution it passed beyond those bounds. Where the massacre took place, neither sex nor age was spared. Among the victims was a distinguished Northman named Palig. This man had repaid the bounty of Ethelred by fighting under the standard of his enemies. Palig and his children were all doomed to die. Gunhilda, his wife, was a sister of Sweyn, the great Danish chieftain; and in submitting with heroic dignity to her fate, after witnessing the death of her husband and her son, she is said to have predicted that all England would have ere long to meet a weighty reckoning for the deeds of that day.*

Sweyn's invasion.

The next year Sweyn made his appearance in England at the head of a powerful army. Exeter, through the treachery of its commander, passed into his hands. During four years, the country, with the exception of some fortified places, was wholly at his mercy. Everywhere he came as an avenger—not only to plunder, but to consume by fire, and to cut down with the sword. At the end of the fourth year he consented to leave the island on condition of receiving thirty-six thousand pounds of silver; and that sum was paid to him.

Invasion under Thurchil.

But the army under Sweyn had no sooner departed, than another, no less ferocious, appeared under Thurchil. This chief affected to seek vengeance for the death of a brother, as Sweyn had sought it for the death of a sister. Another three years of unchecked exposure to Danish spoliation and cruelty now awaited the unhappy country. Elphege, the good archbishop of Canterbury, was doomed to see the people, the town, and the cathedral of Canterbury

* *Chron. Sax.* Florence Wigorn. ad an. 1002. Malms. *de Reg.* lib. ii. c. 10.

destroyed by these demons, and then to perish himself by their hands, from the blows inflicted on him while in their cups. Could he have descended to save his life by paying the price which had been fixed upon it, he might have been spared. Having ravaged half the kingdom, Thurchil consented to enter the service of Ethelred for the sum of forty-eight thousand pounds. This proposal was accepted, and the greater part of his followers showed a disposition to settle in the country.

Second invasion by Sweyn.

Sweyn had secretly consented to this invasion by Thurchil. But it did not accord with his plans that the result should be of this nature. He had sworn on the death of his sister to possess himself of the sovereignty of England. He now collected a force which promised to be equal to such an enterprise. The splendour as well as the greatness of this armament was a favourite theme with the poets of the age. The northern provinces submitted without resistance, and the Danish inhabitants rendered aid to their countrymen. Marching northward, where the conqueror expected opposition, his instructions were that the towns should be given to the flames, that the churches should be deprived of everything valuable, and that every male should be put to the sword. And these mandates were fully acted upon. Ethelred and Thurchil shut themselves up within the walls of London, which held out against every stratagem of the besiegers. But in all other directions the approach of the Northmen scared away resistance.

Sweyn proclaims himself king.

Sweyn retired to Bath. He there proclaimed himself king of England, and summoned the chief men of Wessex to meet him in that place, and to swear allegiance to him. Even the capital began to waver in its fidelity; so that Ethelred sent his family to Normandy, and sought concealment himself in the Isle of Wight. But in less than a month from the time when the prospects of the English monarch had become thus gloomy, Sweyn died. Sweyn named his

son Canute as his successor. The English rallied around Ethelred, and Canute was obliged to make a precipitate retreat from the country.

Invasion by Canute.

In the following year Canute returned, with a fleet and army described in glowing terms by ancient writers. Thurchil had sought his pardon, and had obtained it. But Ethelred the 'Unready' had done nothing to prepare himself for this exigency. The vengeance he took on the naturalized Northmen, both by sword and by assassination, only added to the dangers of his position. Edmund, wearied apparently by this incompetency, assumed independence of his father; but failed to collect a force sufficient to warrant his attempting to measure his strength with the enemy. The army of Edmund quartered itself in the northern counties, while that under Canute roamed unimpeded through the south. Affairs had come to this pass when Ethelred breathed his last in London. Edmund, who was with him in his sickness, was proclaimed king by the citizens.*

Edmund's brave resistance of the Danes under Canute.

Had Edmund become king of England some forty years earlier, in the place of his father, it is probable that in him the peaceful and prosperous reign of Edgar would have been perpetuated. The resources of the country at that time would have sufficed, under proper management, to have kept the Northmen at bay; and free action being thus secured to the springs of internal prosperity, England might have known nothing of a Danish dynasty, or of a Norman conquest. So general and so deep was the distrust of Ethelred during the latter years of his reign, that the national spirit appeared to have become extinct. The Northmen had learnt to despise the natives, even when ten to one. But with the accession of Edmund the most inert became active, and a people who seemed to have lost all heart are seen rising into heroism.

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* *Chron. Sax.* Flor. Wigorn. Malms. *de Reg.* lib. ii. c. 10. Hunting. v. 205, 206. Westmin. 201, 202.

London alone had been strong enough to resist the invader. Canute now invested it with an army of twenty-seven thousand men. But Edmund passed through the enemies' ships in a boat by night. His call to the men of Wessex brought great numbers to his standard. Canute, leaving a division of his forces to watch the metropolis, marched at the head of a powerful army to meet the king. The two competitors faced each other at a place called Scearston. The battle was most obstinately sustained on both sides. It lasted the whole day. The next morning it was renewed. In this second conflict Edmund caught sight of Canute. Rushing towards him, his battle-axe fell on the shield of the Dane with such force as to divide it asunder, and to wound his horse in the shoulder. Canute owed his life to the number of his followers who chanced to be on the spot. In this pending state of the struggle, Edric, a false Saxon, struck off the head of a slain warrior, and raising it aloft, cried to the English, 'See the head of Edmund 'your king.' For a moment the dismay intended to be produced by this stratagem became visible. But Edmund darted to an eminence, removed his helmet, and raising his voice to reassure his men, restored their confidence. The darkness of the second night came, and the combatants were still upon the field. But on the morning of the third day it was manifest that the greater loss had been on the side of the Danes; and Canute, to recruit his forces, began to retrace his steps towards London.

Battle of Scearston.

Edmund followed without delay. At Brentford a second engagement took place, in which the advantage was with the Danes; but in the third engagement, near Oxford, the Northmen were signally defeated. Canute now raised the siege of London, and passed from the Isle of Sheppey into East Anglia, ravaging the country in his way northward. Edmund was again upon his path. At Ashdown (Assingdon) another engagement took place. The Danes knew their con-

dition to be perilous. To raise their courage, Thurchil assured them that the omen from the flight of the raven had been eminently propitious. The traitor Edric, strange to say, was again in command, and was the first to fly.* Edmund, and the faithful among his followers, fought the whole day. The moon had risen for some hours before the deadly strife reached its close. On the morrow Edmund found that his losses, especially among the men of rank, on whom he had most reason to depend, had been alarmingly great. He retreated into Gloucestershire; Canute followed, and another desperate encounter would have taken place, had not the partisans of the two leaders prevailed on them to agree to a compromise.

Compromise between Edmund and Canute.

In the adjustment made, the part of England south of the Thames was assigned to Edmund, that to the north fell to Canute. Only a few weeks later, Edmund perished by the hand of an assassin. Canute profited by this event, but it does not appear that he was privy to it. Why Edmund was called the 'Ironside' is uncertain. The name was manifestly a fitting one, for his short experience of sovereignty, which required him to be prompt in putting on his armour, never allowed him to put it off.†

Canute becomes king of England.

Canute now became king of England, and two men of his race, Harald and Hardicanute, succeeded him in that dignity. The sovereignty then returned to the Saxon line in the person of Edward the Confessor; and in its next change it passed to the Norman line, through Harold. From the battle of Hastings we date a new epoch in English history.

Retrospect.

We have thus taken our retrospect of the Revolutions effected by the Sword in Anglo-Saxon Britain. Its first great achievement we find in the 'Migration,'

* This Edric appears to have been a singularly gifted villain, but he at length met with his reward from the hand of Canute. Flor. Wigorn. ad an. 1007–1017.

† *Chron. Sax.* Flor. Wigorn. Malms. *de Reg.* lib. ii. c. 10. Lappenberg, ii. 187–193.

which transferred the lands of England from the Celt to the Saxon. The second we see in those wars of the Heptarchy which issued in the concentration of the sovereignty in the house of Cerdic. The third is before us in the effect of the Danish invasions, which favoured the centralization of the sovereignty by falling with much more disastrous effect on Northumbria and Mercia than on Wessex, and by pointing to the advantage of a common centre in that quarter. At the same time, we see in these invasions a grand impediment to the social progress that might otherwise have been realized.

During the first two centuries after the landing of the Saxons, the wars of the Heptarchy are the great bar in the way of social improvement. During the two centuries which follow, the Danes become the great hindrance. These facts cover nearly the whole space between the landing of Hengist and the invasion by the Duke of Normandy. The intervals of comparative quiet and security are few, and of short duration. The characteristic features of the period are unsettledness, danger, and suffering.

Ancient and modern England.

If we except the affair of the Pretender in 1745, it is now two centuries since England has seen war. How significant the contrast between the face of this same country during these two centuries, and during the two which preceded the reign of Egbert, or the two which followed! The land which was as a perpetual battle-field for ages has ceased through two hundred years to see a soldier, except on parade. In this difference we see the effect, not only of a better consolidated monarchy, but of the better constitutional precautions by which the interests of society are guarded against the accidents of character in the person of the sovereign. The Witan of the Anglo-Saxon seemed to exercise a weighty function on the demise of a king, and on some other occasions. But the king being once invested with the supreme power, the character of the man determined the character of the times. The

great want was, not only that there should be a central and supreme authority, but that the authority so recognised should have been better defined, better aided, regulated, and guarded, and, as the consequence, better obeyed. But the due subordination of the less to the greater, of the factious to the patriotic, belongs only to that advanced stage in the political education of a people which comes from experience—the experience of generations and centuries. Of course, underneath the changes before us on the surface of Anglo-Saxon history, there were the differences of race, of religion, and of usage, ever seething, and contributing their restless influences to one phase of change after another. How far these differences were softened by Christianity, and by other causes, so as to prepare the way for the England of the future, we have still to inquire.

CHAPTER VI.

EFFECT OF THE SAXON AND DANISH CONQUESTS ON THE DISTRIBUTIONS OF RACE.

Results from the differences of race.

THE strifes which come so constantly to the surface of Anglo-Saxon history had their roots far beneath. They were not effects without causes. The effects seem to indicate that the causes were pervading and of much force, and such was the fact. The great cause we no doubt find in the differences of race, and in the other differences consequent on that difference. The two great lines of distinction in this respect were those which separated—first between the Saxon and the Briton, and then between the Saxons, the Britons, and the Danes. But there were lesser lines of separation beneath these, which tended in their measure to impart to the story of Anglo-Saxon Britain the complexion under which it is known to us.

Diversities of race among the Anglo-Saxons.

On the differences of this nature which obtained among the Teutons who were the founders of the English Heptarchy, we shall allow the venerable Bede to speak. 'From the Jutes,' he writes, 'sprang the 'men of Kent, and the Wihtware, the tribe which now 'dwelleth in the Isle of Wight, and the other tribe 'in the country of the East Saxon opposite to 'the Isle of Wight, whom men still call by the 'name of the hundred of the Jutes. From the 'Saxons, that is to say, from the land now called 'the country of the Old Saxons, descended the East 'Saxons, the South Saxons, and the West Saxons. 'From the Angles, that is to say, from the country 'called Anglia (Anglen), and which from that time 'till now is said to have remained waste, between the 'provinces of the Jutes and the Old Saxons, descended 'the East Angles, the Mercians, the race of the

'Northumbrians, and all the rest of the nations of 'England.'*

Influence of these diversities.

It will be seen that in this description precedence in regard to extent of territory, and, in consequence, with regard to numbers, is assigned to the Angles, who took possession of the north and north-west portion of the island. The next position is assigned to the Saxons, who gave the name of 'Saxon' to their several territories in the south and south-east. To the Jutes falls the smallest space, and the smallest influence. These tribes possessed much in common, but they were distinguished from each other in many respects—in dialect, in customs, in personal qualities. Many traces of these diversities are still perceptible in the several territories which they respectively occupied. It is probable that along with these 'three 'tribes' there were considerable admixtures of Frisians, Franks, and even Longobards,† though not to such extent as to be readily traced by us at this distance of time. The differences between these settlers—in speech, in physiognomy, in complexion, in the colour of the eyes and hair, and in dress and manners, were probably much stronger than we are disposed to imagine. Many of the physical diversities still observable among us, though much softened by time, have descended from this source. Hence, too, many varieties in customs, such as the difference between the Wapentake of Yorkshire, and the Hundred of Sussex.‡

No thoughtful man will suppose that these varieties could exist without awakening more or less of a spirit

* *Hist.* lib. i. c. 15.

† Procopius, *de Bello Gothico*, iv. 20, 93 et seq. Palgrave, i. c. 2.

‡ In the history of Anglo-Saxon legislation frequent reference is made, down to the time of Edward the Confessor, to the differences between Wessex-law, Mercian-law, and Danish-law. Each people had their peculiar usages, which were recognised and respected on such occasions. See *Laws of Alfred and Gothrun*, and *Laws of Edward the Confessor*. Edgar's laws recognise distinctions of this nature between Kentishmen, and South Angles, and North Angles.

of clannish pride and rivalry; and we need not attempt to show what the effect of such passions has generally been among such communities. The history of the Highlands of Scotland, down to comparatively recent times, furnishes ample illustration on this point. Hence, in great part, the absence of all combination between the different states of the Heptarchy, whether in opposing the incursions of the Britons along the western side of their territory, or of the Scots along the northern side. As the wars carried on with those foes subsided, internal feuds, from other causes, came into more vigorous action, and served to impose a long succession of checks on all tendencies towards unity and improvement.

Effect of the Saxon invasion on the location of the Britons.

Much has been written concerning the supposed effect of the Saxon invasion on the Britons. The fact that the Britons kept together along nearly the whole of the western side of the island, from Cumberland to Cornwall, and the small traces of the British tongue along the parallel territory on the eastern side of that line, would seem to suggest that the effect of this memorable collision was, that the natives relinquished the one half of their land entirely to the invader, but retained firm hold on the other half. It is not probable, however, that the population of any of the Saxon states was without a considerable admixture of British blood. The keels of the Saxon freebooters can hardly be supposed to have brought settlers in sufficient numbers, and of both sexes, to warrant such an opinion. Greatly more was done ere long upon the soil than can be explained on such a supposition. That a large admixture of this kind took place along the border lands which separated between the two races is unquestionable. In the south and east, where the deteriorating effects of the Roman civilization were the most deeply rooted, the Saxons found the portion of the natives most habituated to submission. The most energetic, no doubt, sought a new home westward or northward, rather

than submit to the new masters: but the more passive would often cling to the soil on any tolerable conditions.

Then, concerning language, the difference between the two races in this respect is supposed by some to have been much exaggerated. According to Cæsar, Britain was largely peopled from Belgic Gaul, and not less than one-third of the vocabulary of the Cymric tongue is said to consist of words derived from roots common to it and to the Belgic.*

These affinities between the Cymric and the Saxon, if existing to anything like this extent, are enough to suggest that it may not be easy to say how far the one has really superseded the other. That in England, the Welsh has been to a very large extent superseded by the Saxon is certain; and we conclude, in consequence, that the Britons who dwelt amidst the conquering Saxons must have borne a small proportion in influence or numbers to the race which had subdued them. But that the Saxons were alive to the uses that might be made of the vanquished natives is not only in the highest degree probable from the facts of the case, but manifest from the records of history. It should be remembered, that considerable spaces intervened between the establishment of one Saxon state and another, so that the natives would know, as resistance became hopeless, what was to be expected from submission.

So late as the year 900, the Britons of the West, that is, of the counties of Somerset, Wilts, Dorset, Devon, and Cornwall, joined their forces with the Danes against Egbert. Their princes were then finally prostrated, and the chief authority in those parts passed into the hands of the West-Saxon thanes. But the name of 'Weal-cynne,' by which those counties are designated in the will of Alfred, shows that the population remained for the most part British.

* Palgrave, i. 27.

Even so late as the time of Athelstan, Exeter, the capital of the Dumnonii from times preceding the conquest by the Romans, was governed by the joint authority of Britons and Saxons; but from the age of that monarch the independent power of the Britons of the West was confined to Cornwall, where the old Celtic has been the vernacular language of a portion of the inhabitants almost to our own day. The names of the leading men in the above counties, as preserved in *Domesday*, are none of them British, and the English law had then become common to them all, 'at the same time it is certain that the English 'speech was still unknown to the main body of the 'people.'*

Along the east coast we discover few or no traces of the British. The population in those regions is more purely Saxon than in any other part of Saxon Britain down to the time of the Danish invasions. Of the footing retained by the Britons along the Welsh side of the Bristol Channel, through Glouces-

* Palgrave, i. 410, 411. *Proofs and Illustrations*, 243, 244. In fact, the names of places in England are much more of an old British origin than is commonly supposed, and warrant a strong conclusion as to the presence of the British with the Saxons to the latest period of Anglo-Saxon history. If there be any word that we are wont to account as certainly of Saxon origin it is the word *ford*, as a termination in the names of places—such as Brad*ford*, Staf*ford*. But it is singular that this word does not occur in the names of places in those countries from which our Saxons and Northmen came. Other names, which they gave with frequency to places in this island, occur as often in the countries on the shores of the Baltic. But it is not thus with the word *ford*. In the British tongue, however, we have the word *fordd* or *ford*, denoting a road or passage; and the fact would seem to be that the word was adopted from the Britons, but with a somewhat restricted application to roads where they cross streams or rivers. We scarcely need say that the British influence must have been great which sufficed to ensure the continuance of local names at all upon this scale.—See Barnes's *Notes on Britain and the Britons*.

Names ending in *combe*—a valley, and in *way* or *wye*—water, are evidently of British origin. Shakespeare is an Englishman, but the river's name with which his own is associated, *Avon*, is old British. 'The men of 'Arvon [Avon] with their ruddy lances.'—*Ancient Laws of Wales*, p. 50.

tershire, Herefordshire, and Shropshire into Cheshire, we need not speak. Northward from that point the old British element spreads more or less for a while from west to east.

The Angles in relation to the Britons, Picts, and Scots in Northumbria.

We say little on the vexed question concerning the origin and history of the Picts and Scots. We have seen that the Angles were stubbornly resisted in their endeavours to possess themselves of the ample territory between the Humber and the Forth. The Humber formed the border line of the southern division of the ancient kingdom of Northumbria, as the Forth was the boundary of the northern division. The population of that kingdom was made up of four nations—Angles, Britons, Picts, and Scots. The last three nations, in common with the first, were governed by their own chiefs or princes; and when the chief of the Angles was strong, these chiefs paid him tribute; when that prince happened to be weak, they asserted their independence. These peoples were often subdued by the Angles, but never more than partially displaced. In the northern half of Northumbria the Picts and Scots were the most numerous; in the southern half, the Angles were the most powerful on the eastern side of the hills of Cumberland and Yorkshire, the Britons on the western side. These comparative numbers, moreover, and these relations to territory, appear to have remained much the same, as regarded the population, amidst all the revolutions of power among those who affected to govern them. The Britons of Cumbria, of Cambria, and of the West, with their chain of military stations, reaching from the rock of Dumbarton to Mount St. Michael, have left traces of their blood and language along the whole of that distance. The ancient Cumber survives in the modern Cumberland—which means the country of the Cymry, or, as it is sometimes written, the Cumry. From the Clyde to the Dee the Cumry were once the prevalent race. Even the power of Athelstan was not sufficient to awe them into subjection. They fought

against him at Brunanburgh—showing, in that instance, as the Britons generally did, a greater disposition to side with the Danes than with the Saxons. In the West, extending from Somerset to Cornwall, the characteristics of the British were gradually effaced by the ascendency, first of the Saxons, and afterwards of the Normans. In Cumbria the same change must be attributed to infusions from the Angles and the Scots, but more especially to an invasion of the province by the Scandinavians in the tenth century. From the mountains of Wales the descendants of the ancient Cumry have seen their brethren in the west and north melt away in the great stream of mingling populations, while they have themselves retained their old Celtic speech, and their old features of Celtic nationality.

Location of the Danes in England.

We have seen the extent to which the Danes became possessors of the English territory. In 876 Halfdene, the Northman, divided Northumbria among his followers, who soon became cultivators of the soil which had so fallen to them. The treaty of Alfred with Guthorm placed East Anglia—including Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridge, the Isle of Ely, a portion of Bedfordshire, and parts adjacent—in the hands of that chief, to be holden by him and his descendants in subordination to Wessex. Mercia—the territory of the great Offa—became a prey to these invaders, who at length gave stability to their acquisitions in that quarter by the power which they concentrated in the Five Danish burgs—viz. Lincoln, Nottingham, Derby, Leicester, and Stamford. Some make these burgs to be seven, including York and Chester. So some three-fourths of Anglo-Saxon Britain came to be, in a political sense, and for a time, Danish, the ruling power over that large surface of country having passed into the hands of that people. The Angles, the Britons, and the Scots in those territories were all numerous, much more numerous than the Danes; but the Danes, who found settlements among them, had been

sufficiently strong to subdue them. We have seen that there were many oscillations of power between these new conquerors and the conquered; but that the Danes were conquerors to this extent, and possessed such sway, though only for a season, is a fact that must have had much influence on the future. The policy of Alfred, when he had saved Wessex, was to cede to the Danes, upon conditions, the territories they had won, and to do all that might be done towards amalgamating the different races into one people.

General distribution.

Through all these influences the Danish blood in England became the most prevalent in East Anglia; next, along the eastern coast between the Humber and the Forth; and next, in the midland counties, forming the kingdom of Mercia. In the west, the admixture was between the Saxons and the British. In all the lands to the north and north-west, it consisted in a large displacement of the British element by the Anglian and Danish.

All these facts, it will be seen, related to the position of the Danes in Anglo-Saxon Britain before the accession of Canute. The formidable invasions which immediately preceded that event, and the event itself, of course added much, both in the way of numbers and influence, to the Danish power in this country before the Conquest.

Norwegian settlers in Cumberland and Westmoreland.

During the latter half of the tenth century a powerful Norwegian migration appears to have set in, with little noise, but with much steadiness and effect, on Cumberland and the parts adjoining. We have reason to suppose that this migration did not pass the Yorkshire hills from the east. Its approach appears to have been by means of the Irish Sea, and the Isle of Man, from the west. But so considerable was this movement at the time mentioned, that the traces of the Celtic population in those parts in the times which follow, are few and faint, while the traces of the Scandinavian, in the names of places and other remains,

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are still found almost everywhere. The link which had connected the Celts of the hill country of Wales with those of the hill country of Scotland, was thus displaced; and the blood of the Northmen, either Danes or Saxons, became the dominant blood along the whole of the lowlands between the Mersey and the Clyde. Names ending in *thwaite*,* *by*, and *thorp*,† are of very frequent occurrence over that district; and all these are of Scandinavian origin. But then they mingle freely with names ending in *ton*, *ham*, and *worth*, which are of Saxon origin. So it is over a great part of England: and, though the Saxon and the Danish languages included much in common, the prevalence of such names from the one or the other of those languages in a district, may be taken as a pretty certain indication of the prevalence of race in that locality before the Conquest.‡

The Northmen who made their descent from the Solway on the shores of Cumberland, were probably of the same stock with those who, about the same time, had secured a footing in Pembrokeshire. The names Mil*ford* and Haver*ford*, can hardly have been of Saxon

* '*Thwaite*: Norwegian *thveit*, Danish *tved*. This is one of the most characteristic terms of our district, occurring the most frequently in Cumberland, which has about *a hundred names in which it appears*; being also very common in Westmoreland, becoming scarce as we advance into Yorkshire, and ceasing altogether when we arrive at the more purely Danish district of Lincoln.'—*The Northmen in Cumberland and Westmoreland*, by Robert Ferguson, 1856. The term *thwaite* was used to denote a 'clearing,' and occurs most frequently where there was much wood to be cleared. In Norway itself it occurs in some places more than others; in many instances in our Lake districts, the term and its prefix have been transplanted from the mother country, as the names of places in England reappear in the United States.

† *By* is a termination denoting a *dwelling-place*, or home, and is more Danish than Norwegian; the same may be said of *thorp*, which denotes a village.

‡ The Cumberland Britons, pressed by the Saxons and Northmen, seem to have retired by degrees into Wales, leaving little trace of themselves behind, except in some Celtic names of places which have survived them. There is nothing Celtic among the present inhabitants of the district.

origin. The localities do not answer to the Saxon use of the term *ford*—but these places are truly described by the Norse word *fiörd*, which denotes an arm of the sea. The word *holm*, too, applied to the Flat-*holm* and the Steep-*holm*, in the Bristol Channel, is not the Saxon nor the British, but the Norwegian name for *island*.*

It is to be remembered, then, that Saxons and Northmen were related as branches to one parent stem: and, what is more, that the same may be said of the Normans, who were destined to become so blended on our soil with both. But the Northman had come as an intruder on the ground of the Saxon; and this fact was fatal to the unity that might have enabled them to resist the next invader, to whom they were both to become subject. It is clear that the strength of the Danish element in Anglo-Saxon Britain was great—much greater than is commonly apprehended; and disastrous in many respects as was the collision between the two races on our soil, it is probable that the two together furnished a better stamina for the England of a later age, than would have been furnished by the Saxon alone. It is not easy to say how much of our passion for the sea, and of our power there, have come from the blood of this later generation of sea-kings who found their home among us. It is certain that our great sea-captains, and our men of genius in all departments, have their full share of Danish names among them. But if the Danish race were to contribute towards our greatness in the end, it is not less certain that they proved a sad impediment to our progress in the beginning.

It should, however, be distinctly remembered, that the language of England, which was not to become Norman, never became Danish. It is thus manifest that the race which continued to be the most diffused, and

* *The Northmen in Cumberland and Westmoreland*, pp. 9, 10.

the most rooted in the land through all changes was the Anglian or Saxon. At the Conquest, the language spoken in the country contained words from the Latin, more from the Danish, and more than is commonly supposed from the Celtic; but its forms and its substance were those which had been introduced by the three great branches of the migration, the Jutes, the Saxons, and the Angles, and especially by the latter, the destined root of England and of its Englishmen.*

* *An Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland, and Ireland*, by E. J. H. Worsaae. London, 1852. 'On the Races of Lancashire, as indicated by the Social Names and the Dialect of the County,' see *Proceedings of the Philological Society*, 1855. 'English Ethnography,' by Dr. Donaldson, *Cambridge Essays*, 1856. 'We entirely miss in English,' says Dr. Donaldson, 'any traces of the distinctive peculiarities of the Danish language. We do not find the article postfixed, there are great differences in the numerals, the substantive verb follows a different form in the plural, and the peculiar negative particle, *ikke*, is never used in this island. From this last circumstance alone we feel convinced that the Danes exerted only a transitory and limited influence on the language and national characteristics of our ancestors.'—Ibid.

CHAPTER VII.

REVOLUTION IN RELIGION IN ANGLO-SAXON BRITAIN.

RELIGION in some form is a want of humanity. All communities accordingly, even the lowest, have their religions. The choice in history is always found to lie, not between any particular religion and no religion, but between one religion and another. Nor is it just to suppose that a religion which may appear to us to be very unreasonable, can never have been a religion deeply felt, or sincerely believed. As a rule, the men who sustain false religions, are as firm believers in the religion they profess, as are the nations who sustain what we hold to be a more true and enlightened faith.

Religion a necessity of the race.

Everywhere, in consequence, religion is one of the most potent influences in making the man and the nation such as we find them. Nowhere is this more true than in the case of such rude communities as come before us in the history of the Saxons and the Danes. Strong are the relations between ignorance and credulity. Many causes may have contributed to make the religion of a people such as it is; but religion once imbibed, becomes itself a cause of wide and powerful influence. In this island the Saxon and the Dane soon learnt to relinquish their heathenism. But the Christianity which they embraced was much too narrow and intolerant to allow of their giving us any satisfactory account of their old religion when once they had embraced the new. Frequent as is the mention made by the Christian Saxons of the pagans of their own time, and of the preceding time, there is

Its potency in history.

Heathen life of the Saxon and the Dane.

a remarkable absence in their writings of any attempt to describe the nature of the heathenism once so familiar to themselves. So that our direct information on this subject, especially as regards the Anglo-Saxons, is much more fragmentary and obscure than might have been expected.*

It is certain, however, that the objects of worship among the Anglo-Saxons were the same substantially with those recognised by the wide-spread German race on the Continent. The mythology of the Teutonic nations as known to Cæsar and Tacitus, was only partially developed, as compared with the shape which that worship had assumed some three or four centuries later, when the Saxons invaded Britain. The worship which the first Germanic settlers brought into the north of Europe is supposed to have recognised one Supreme Being, in a manner unknown among their descendants in later ages.† This purer faith the first emigrants bore with them from the East, as they made their way along the track of territory between the Caspian and the Euxine.

Their early faith deteriorated.

By degrees this belief gave place to a more complicated system of nature worship, and to hero and demon worship. In history, monotheism always declines where the authority of revelation fails. If that doctrine is to be secure as the faith of a nation, it must rest on some more intelligible ground than reason can present to the popular understanding. Creature worship, in some form or other, is natural to man. The immediate worship of an Infinite Creator is too hard for him. The chasm between the ordinary capacities of men and such an object of worship, is too

* In the canons of the Anglo-Saxon Church, the remains of the old paganism among the people are never named but to be condemned; and the topic often occurs.—See *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, 18, 23, 24, 71–74, 86, 162, 396, 397, 419. Persistence in heathen worship after the profession of Christianity became general was made capital.—Ibid.

† Mallet's *Northern Antiquities*, c. iv. v.

great to be passed by any process of metaphysical thought possible to such capacities.

Identity of religious faith between the Saxon and the Dane.

The history of all false religions, and the history of the larger portion of Christendom itself, furnishes evidence but too conclusive on this point. But whatever may have preceded, it is certain that the worship of the Saxons, Jutes, and Angles, in the fifth and sixth centuries, had become very much what the Danish worship is known to be in the ninth and tenth centuries. The gods worshipped by the Danes when they became invaders of Britain, were the gods after whom the Anglo-Saxons had named the days of the week three centuries earlier. During those centuries the Scalds of the Northmen may have expanded and embellished the mythic fictions of their race, but the tree, though it had grown, was still the same tree. In the religious life of the Dane, accordingly, as indicated in the *Edda*, we have beyond doubt the main elements of the religious life of the Saxon, from whose earlier traditions the *Edda* itself was in great part derived.

Our object in this place does not require that we should attempt to distinguish between the true and the false in the mythology of the northern nations. Our business just now is not with what the Saxon or the Dane *should* have believed, but with what they *did* believe. Their divinities may have had some place in history, but they owe the character under which they are known to us to the forms of thought, and to the passions, dominant among their worshippers. Such worshippers fashion their gods, and are fashioned by them. To know their deities, in consequence, is to know themselves.

Odin worship.

With the Dane, and with the Saxon before him, Odin or Woden, was the great divinity. Amidst the cold and barren regions of the north, and amidst the storm and danger of his Baltic winters, the Saxon had often heard from poet and from priest of the wonder-working life of Woden. How he learnt many

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centuries since, to hate the ambition of the Romans, and to despise the nations that submitted to it; how he left his great city of Asgard in the far East, and passing the great seas of that eastern land, travelled westward; how the warlike youth of all nations flocked to his standard; how he passed along the territory of the Saxons, and Angles, and Jutes, in his way to conquests which covered all the regions northward; how he became the father of many kings, dividing among them many lands; how, while he could rush as a devouring flame over the battle-field, he could use most persuasive speech in prose and verse, knew many secret arts which gave him power over the seen and the unseen, and power to establish many wise laws; how finding his end approaching, and scorning to die of a wasting sickness, he gathered his brave men about him, inflicted a succession of wounds upon his person, and spoke in those last moments of returning whence he came, to the home of the gods; and how, having been worshipped while he lived, he became known when he had departed, as no other than the greatest of the gods, the father of creation, of gods and of men. The Mars, the Mercury, and the Apollo of the classical mythology appears to meet in the Woden of the Saxon and the Northman, but the warlike element is the prominent one. He was 'The 'terrible god, the father of slaughter, the giver of 'victory, the reviver of the faint in battle—naming 'those who should be slain.' Warriors go forth vowing to send to him so many ghosts from the field. These were his right, he receives them in the hall of Valhalla—the place where all who die with weapons in their hands receive their reward. There the brave sit down with him at his feast. But here they bow in all things to the destiny of his will. They hear him often amidst the din of arms—see him often where the death-strife thickens. Even this, is not enough. Of Odin the *Edda* says: 'He liveth and 'governeth during the ages; he directeth everything

'which is high, and everything which is low; whatever 'is great, and whatever is small; he hath made the 'heavens, the air, and man, who is to live for ever— 'and before the heavens and the earth this god 'existed.'

Not only Hengist and Horsa, but all the founders of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, without exception, claimed to be, in some way or other, descendants of Woden. Over the north, and in this country, the name of Woden was given to the fourth day of the week; and the names of many places in England at this day, are names derived from the worship there paid to this deity by our Saxon ancestors.*

Other deities.

Next to Woden as an object of veneration, stood Thor, the most valiant of his sons. Thor gave his name to the fifth day of the week among the Anglo-Saxons. In him the Saxon saw the 'Thunderer.' The defender of the gods. The strong arm that could subdue giants and monsters. The girdle he wore ensured him a perpetual strength. The mallet he wielded with his mailed hand shattered resistance to pieces. In all this the initiated may have seen a mythic representation of an elemental deity, powerful over the forces of nature, which must be subdued and regulated to be subservient to man. But the rude Saxon saw nothing of these hidden meanings. Thor was to him what Woden was—a great warrior.

Though the powers of all the gods seemed to meet in Odin, the Mars of the northern mythology was the god after whom the 'Tuesday' of the Anglo-Saxon week was named. Worship was no doubt rendered to Tcio or Tyr on that day, but we know nothing concerning his special influence on his worshippers. The same may be said of Frea, from whom comes our name of 'Friday.' Frea appears to have been the god of boundaries and of increase. Of the

* Mallet, *North. Antiq.* c. iii. v. Kemble's *Saxons in England*, i. 343, 344.

god Sætere, from whom our 'Saturday' is named, we know even less, as connected with Anglo-Saxon history, than of the preceding.

Story of Balder.

But the myths of the north assign a conspicuous place to Balder, another son of Odin. They described him as the god of light and grace, of such manly beauty and excellence that light seemed to beam from him upon all beholders. But a prophecy went forth that Balder would perish. The gods were afflicted by the tidings. Frigga, the wife of Odin, took an oath from all created nature, binding every individual thing not to harm the person so menaced, and so deeply beloved. It was found that no weapon could touch the life so guarded. But a sprig of misletoe, too young at the time to have been included in the oath imposed by Frigga, had been excepted. Loki—the Satan of this dream—placed a branch of the fatal misletoe in a hostile hand, and Balder was killed. Odin himself descended to the abodes of the dead, hoping to prevail on the goddess Hel, the guardian of the departed, to give back her prey. It was promised that Balder should return on condition that all created nature should weep for him. All wept, save one old crone, whom Loki had possessed. When called upon to join the weeping, she answered: 'What have the 'gods done for me that I should weep for Balder? 'Let Hel keep her dead.' So Balder could not be made to live again; and so his faithful Nanna, refusing to survive her beautiful lord, perished on his funeral pile. Weeping virgins spread the pall over the loved one in the cold dark home of the invisible. But the belief, nevertheless, went abroad, that a son of Balder had taken ample vengeance on the wiles of Loki; and that a time would come, 'after the twilight 'of the gods,' when Balder would rise from the dead, and when his rising would be a signal for the ending of all sin, and sorrow, and death.*

* Mallet, *North. Ant.* c. v. Kemble's *Anglo-Saxons*, i. 367–369.

It may, we think, be reasonably supposed, that the materials of such a story did something towards preparing the people who could devise it, or believe in it, for their adoption of that better creed to which it has some strong and beautiful points of resemblance.

Loki and the evil deities.

The Loki of the Northman, in common with the Evil One of the Scriptures, had his place once where the good dwell. For the punishment of his wiles he is now put under restraint. What Loki was to the Danes, a being named Grendal had been to the Saxons. Thus we see that the doctrine of an Evil Spirit had its precursor among the old heathenisms of the north; and we regret to say that this devil-doctrine became only more sensuous, and more coarsely superstitious, when assumed along with the profession of Christianity. Nothing could be more offensive than the use to which it was applied by the priesthood of those times. Our familiar expression, 'Old Nick,' comes from Nicor, the name given to a species of elve, or water-devil, found planning his mischief along the shores of lakes, rivers, and seas.

The Fates.

The northern nations, moreover, had their Fates, who wove the web of destiny, and to whom both gods and men were subject. The three Norns—embracing the Past, the Present, and the Future—were what the three Fates of the Greek mythology had long been. The Saxon word *weird* was used to denote fate or destiny; and we have all heard of the 'weird sisters.' Confidence in women supposed to be in possession of such knowledge of the things that shall be, was a conspicuous element in the northern heathenism. But in the warrior creed, the fate of battles, and of those who should be there found among the living or the dead, was with Odin. So that the Fates, if in some things supreme, were in others subordinate; and the weird sister who might see the future, had no power to produce change there.*

* *Edda*, part 1. Kemble's *Anglo-Saxons*, i. c. 12. Olaus, *Hist.* iii. c. 9.

Worship of Saxon heathendom.

In honour of these divinities the Anglo-Saxons reared edifices, which are called temples, set up idols in such places, presented oxen in sacrifice before them, and connected feasting and drinking with their acts of homage to them. Such was the worship practised in Kent at the time of its conversion.* It is certain, also, that such was the worship which obtained in the other states of the Heptarchy.† Bede, in his account of Northumbria, makes mention of a chief priest connected with the heathen worship in that kingdom. So that there were not only priests, but priests with some gradation of authority among them.‡ But the authority which the Saxon ceded to the priest was small, compared with that which the Celt had ceded to the Druid; and, in fact, but few of their priests would seem to have accompanied them in their migration. It is from this cause, in part, that our information concerning the heathen worship of the Saxons after their settlement in this country is so limited. We have no reason to suppose that their sacrifices in Britain ever included human victims; but in their own land, the immolation of captives in honour of their gods was by no means uncommon.§

This ceasing of human sacrifices, and this raising of buildings for worship, on the part of the Saxon in Britain, may suffice to indicate that the change of country had conduced speedily and considerably to a change of manners. In the countries which these people had left, human sacrifices continued to be offered so late as the ninth century; and long after the times of Hengist and Horsa their only places for worship continued to be of that rude Druidical description the remains of which are still found in many parts of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. But the time came in which all these countries began to rival each other

* Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* i. 30.

† Ibid. ii. 5, 9, 15; iii. 8, 30; iv. 22, 27.

‡ Ibid. ii. 13.

§ Sidonius, *Opera, Ep.* viii. 6.

in the splendour of the structures reared in honour of their deities.

The great temple at Upsal in Sweden, appears to have been especially dedicated to Odin, Thor, and Frea. Its periodical festivals were accompanied by different degrees of conviviality and licence, in which human sacrifices were rarely wanting, varied in their number and value by the supposed exigency. In some cases even royal blood was selected, that the imagined anger of the gods might be appeased. In Scandinavia, the authority of the priest was much greater than it would appear to have been among the Anglo-Saxons. It was his word often which determined where the needed victims should be found. It was his hand that inflicted the wound, and his voice which said 'I send thee to Odin,' declaring the object of the sacrifice to be, that the gods might be propitiated, that there might be a fruitful season, or a successful war. It was to his mandate that the proudest could bow without any sense of degradation, his command being the utterance, not of the man, but of the god he represented. In this manner, as we have before observed, the will resisted nowhere else, has often felt that there was at least one quarter from which restraint might come. Of course the Northmen were great believers in omens, and the priests were the interpreters of omens. We should add, that they were highly chivalrous in their conduct towards women. But even their love only tended to deepen their hate, and to give a stronger intensity to their passion to annihilate resistance. The women had imbibed the spirit of the men. It was indispensable to the successful suitor that he should be brave.

Summary concerning this heathen life.

So do we come to see something of the forms of thought, and something of the passions—and the light and shadow, which made up the life of the Saxon and the Dane in their state of heathendom. The great element of the godlike in that heathen system seemed to be placed in the propensity to vanquish and destroy.

But underneath all this bloodshed and marauding lay a conviction which was regarded as imparting to it manliness, nobleness, and even sanctity. This conviction was, that the man employed in tilling the ground, or selling his wares, should be reckoned a deteriorated man; and that it belongs to the firmer natures, who contemn such employments, to give law to the weaker natures which conform to them. If this conception was not clearly expressed, and reduced to an axiom, nevertheless it was there, and it did not work the less potently from the fact that untaught passion, rather than a trained logic, had settled it as a religious truth. Somehow, the world had come to consist very much of two classes—the comfort-loving and the brave; and if anything could be clear, it was thought to be clear, that the brave should be masters. It might be all very well that the two sorts of people should exist—but the one should assuredly be servant to the other, and whatever destruction of property or life should be necessary to that end, could be no matter to whine and weep over, but the contrary. With Odin, the sword was the instrument to determine who should be uppermost, and so should it be with all the children of Odin. Nor is it among barbarians only that reasoning of this sort may be traced. We find it whenever right is determined by might. It was in this spirit that Hengist and Cerdic, Canute and William the Conqueror alike acquitted themselves. It is in this spirit that the great military monarchies of Europe have become what they are.

Thus in the life of the heathen sea-king, contempt of the civilized man became a feeling eminently religious; and a heart which left no room to pity, became the heart regarded as in the highest degree meet for the pleasures of the Norse paradise. Barbarianism thus became a necessary condition of devoutness, and cruelty became a fruit of piety. The southern peoples were regarded, not only as the foreign, but as the effeminate—as natural enemies to the true children of

nature, and to send many such souls to Odin was to live to some purpose.

It was this complexion of thinking which rendered both the Saxon and the Dane so faithful to their pledge one towards another, and which gave such prominence in their history to the passion of revenge. Their confederations were confederations against the civilized world, and only by fidelity at home could they hope to be successful abroad. In their hour of misfortune, in their moments of torture and death, their solace generally was, that their people would never hear of such disaster without swearing to avenge it. So Inguar and Ubbo came to avenge the death of their father Lodbrog. So Sweyne came to avenge the fate of his sister Gunhilda.

But there was another source from which the courage of the Northman gathered strength. His faith not only taught him that it is a right thing for the sword to rule, but that such rule had been decreed. He was a great fatalist. Odin always named those who should be slain. Every brave man had his work to do, and would be safe until that work should be done. There are two points from which we may look at life—from its beginning, and all in the distance will seem to be contingency; or from its end, when all the parts will appear to have been fixed by the laws of an iron destiny. The worshippers of Odin looked at life as Odin was supposed to look at it, as it will appear at the end; and in so doing they learnt to persuade themselves that, as nothing in the future can be changed, anything in the present may be dared. Great, however, was their solicitude to obtain some glimpse of the future in their seasons of danger. No pains were then spared to get favourable responses from the auguries of the priest, or from the divining of the sorceress.*

It must be obvious, that among a people who lived

* *Northern Antiq.* c. vii. Cluver. *Antiq. Germ.* i. c. 36.

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by means of plunder abroad, and by the help of slaves at home, time must have passed in alternate hardship and indolence—attempting everything or doing nothing. It is not easy to say which of these extremes must have tended to demoralization in the greatest degree—the coarse feasting, drunkenness, and frays of the winter, or the cruelties and excesses of the summer.

But under all this we may see, both in Saxons and Northmen, a people of great physical vigour, strong in will, ardent in passion, indomitable in courage, and of such high natural capacity as could only need to be placed under other influences, to fit them for realizing a form of civilization for themselves greatly in advance of that Roman civilization which had become, and not wholly without reason, the object of their scorn.

We now pass, then, from these warlike and heathen phases of Anglo-Saxon history, to mark the more silent revolution wrought by Christianity, and by the civilization which it did so much to promote. So long as our ancestors were heathen men, Frea, the god of bountifulness, was set up side by side with the 'Father of Slaughter;' and the beautiful myth concerning the fate of Balder, had its place along with pictures of the revellings to be enjoyed in the halls of Valhalla. It was left to Christianity to separate the true in these conceptions from the false, the good from the evil.

Introduction of Christianity.

The first landing of the Saxons in Britain was, as we have seen, in 449. The mission of Augustine, the first Christian preacher among the descendants of these settlers, was in 596. So that about a century and a half intervened, between the landing of Hengist, and the conversion of Ethelbert, his successor on the throne of Kent, to the profession of Christianity. But the conversion of the South Saxons, the last state of the Heptarchy to abandon idolatry, did not take place until 685, almost ninety years later. From 685, Anglo-Saxon Britain may be said to be included in the portion of the globe bearing the name of Christendom. The Danes, indeed, brought their paganism

with them; but they were soon led to embrace the faith of their adopted country.

In what remains of this chapter we shall glance at the leading facts connected with the introduction of Christianity into Anglo-Saxon Britain, and at the main features of the change resulting from that event.

Pope Gregory.

In 592 Gregory the Great became pope. He was by birth a man of rank. His life from his youth was marked by great religious earnestness, and by great self-sacrifice, according to the notions of his time. Though neither a great genius nor a faultless man, compared with the age in which he lived he was a person of eminent ability and virtue. While a humble monk of the order of St. Andrew, it chanced that Gregory passed one day through the market-place at Rome, where some beautiful boys were exposed for sale. Struck with their handsome features, fair complexions, and light flaxen hair, which fell in ringlets on their shoulders, he inquired whence they came. The answer was, 'from Britain.'—'Are they Chris-'tians?' was the next question. 'No, they are pagans.' 'Alas!' said the monk, 'that the Prince of Darkness 'should inhabit forms so lovely—that the beauty of 'the soul should be wanting, where there is such 'beauty of countenance. Of what nation are they?' 'Angles,' was the answer. 'Right,' said Gregory, 'they are angels. From what province?'—'Deira,' was the reply. 'Surely they must be rescued [*de ira*] 'from the wrath of God. What is the name of their 'king?'—'Ælla,' said the slave-master. 'Right again,' said Gregory, 'Alleluia must be sung in the country 'of that king.'* Much may not be said for the taste exhibited in this word-play. But the incident shows the susceptibility of imagination and feeling by which the future pope was characterized—qualities which prompted him to so many of his labours. The idea thus lodged in his mind was not unfruitful. He

* Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* lib. ii. c. i, *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 597.

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sought permission of the then Bishop of Rome to become himself an apostle to the distant heathen whose condition had so much affected him. He had journeyed three days on the road towards Britain, when messengers overtook him with the unwelcome tidings that the people of Rome had prevailed on the pope to revoke his sanction of the enterprise. In the great trouble of the capital, and in prospect of troubles still greater, the people feel, said the messengers, that Gregory is not the man to be spared for such an undertaking.*

Mission of Augustine.

But what Gregory was not to do in person, was to be done under his guidance. In 596, the fourth year of his pontificate, he deputed Augustine, and certain monks, to attempt the introduction of the Gospel among the Anglo-Saxons. Augustine was obedient, but had not reached the shores of Britain when the fears of the brotherhood became so strong, that they halted on their way, and implored permission to return. Gregory exhorted them by letter to be steadfast and believing, and wrote to the Bishop of Arles, urging him to render all needful service to the missionaries. Augustine and his companions committed themselves to their voyage, and landed in the Isle of Thanet. Ethelbert was then king of Kent, and Bertha, his queen, a daughter of Charibert, king of France, was a Christian. The strangers sent a messenger to the king, to state to him that they had come from a distant land, to make known tidings of unspeakable importance to him and to his people. Ethelbert said, let all hospitality be shown to these persons; and four days afterwards he met them in the open air, to hear from them more fully the purpose of their coming. Augustine explained to the king the Christian doctrine. Ethelbert, without at once professing himself a Christian, told them they might preach their doctrine to his subjects, and that they might take up

* Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* ii. c. 1, § 90.

their abode in Canterbury, where provision should be made for their support. The forty monks accordingly, with Augustine at their head, entered that city in procession, chanting a litany, in which they implored that the divine wrath might be turned away from the people.

Its success.

Before the close of the year, ten thousand Saxons are said to have received baptism. Ethelbert himself became a convert. But the king left his subjects to their proper liberty—'for he had learnt,' says Bede, 'from his instructors, that the service of Christ must 'be voluntary, not by compulsion.' Great was the joy of Gregory on learning the signal success which had attended the preaching of his missionaries.* He wrote to Ethelbert, exhorting him, as his 'illustrious 'son,' to continue steadfast in the pursuit of the heavenly crown, and urged him to show his zeal by casting down the idols, and demolishing the structures raised for the pagan worship. He wrote to Augustine also, giving him useful counsel in regard to many questions of casuistry and discipline which began to demand answer from him in his new field of labour—cautioning him, at the same time, against being lifted up with pride by reason of his successes and his miracles! Augustine became archbishop of Canterbury, with power to ordain bishops; the pall—an ornament of dress which denoted a metropolitan dignity—being sent to him by Gregory, that he might acquit himself with due form in such services. Mellitus, Justus, Paulinus, and Rufinianus are among the names of the ecclesiastics sent to assist the new archbishop, and with these, it is said, came all things 'necessary for 'the worship and service of the church—viz., sacred 'vessels and vestments for the altars, also ornaments 'for the churches, and vestments for the priests and 'clerks, as likewise relics of the holy apostles and 'martyrs; besides many books.'†

* *Opera*, ep. vii. 31. † Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* lib. i. c. 28–33.

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Augustine soon became aware that it had not been left to him to be the first to preach the Gospel in Britain. The Christianity which the Britons had adopted while under the Romans, had not only been preserved by them on their retreat into the fastnesses of Wales, but had acquired such influence among them as to have wholly superseded their more ancient worship. But the Christianity received by the Britons was that which had been common to the East and West in the third century, while the Christianity of Augustine was that which obtained in Rome three centuries later. During those three centuries, the system of the secluded Britons had been comparatively stationary — that of the south of Europe had been undergoing many changes. In regard to the time of keeping Easter, and many other observances, the British churches followed the customs of the East, and differed from those of the Church of Rome.

Augustine's conference with the British bishops.

Augustine, with the aid of Ethelbert, sought a conference with certain of the Welsh clergy, in the hope of prevailing on the churches of Wales to conform themselves to the Romish observances. In his first interview, neither his arguments nor his persuasions were of any avail. But a second conference was agreed upon, in which the British representatives were to consist of persons more competent to decide in behalf of their nation. The Welsh now deputed seven of their bishops. These bishops are said to have consulted a recluse famous for his wisdom, touching the course it might behove them to take. The substance of his counsel appears to have been, that unity on the ground of submission as inferiors to Augustine as their superior, was not to be entertained for a moment. Let them arrange to approach the archbishop while he should be seated. If he rose to receive them, the action might be taken as indicating brotherhood and equality, and it would be well to listen dispassionately to his statements. If he received them sitting, his so doing would bespeak pretensions to superiority fraught with

mischief, and it would behove them to look on all measures proposed by him with suspicion. Augustine did not rise. The Welsh bishops acted on the counsel that had been given them. The archbishop lost patience, and said to the Britons, with much warmth, that they should ere long fall by the sword of the Saxons, seeing that they refused to join him in preaching the Gospel to them. This passionate utterance was accounted a prophecy, and was said to have been fulfilled some years later in a battle near Chester, where the loss of the Britons was great, and a large body of monks, assembled to pray in their behalf on a neighbouring hill, were put to the sword.*

This conference took place in the open air under an oak. The place of meeting was some border district, but whether in Gloucestershire or Shropshire is uncertain. The event became a theme of tradition, and a fact in history, between the two races. It taught such of the Anglo-Saxon clergy as were most disposed to make their use of the authority of Rome to cast the reproach of schism on the British Church; while in the imagination of the Briton, it served to identify the spiritual pretensions of Rome, with the territorial pretensions of the Saxons. The slaughter of the Britons at Chester did not take place until some years after the death of Augustine; and the monks slain on that occasion, were from the monastery of Bancor, on the river Dee—an establishment which had long been famous for its learning, and the number of its inmates.†

Before his decease, in 604, Augustine had ordained an ecclesiastic named Laurentius as his successor.

Dissensions continue between the Roman and native clergy.

* Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* ii. c. 2. *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 607.

† Camden, *Brit.* 665, 666. This Bancor, or Bangor-is-y-Ceod, must be distinguished from Bangor in the Menai Straits.

There are passages in Bede which show that the Saxons and the Britons were severed from each other by strong mutual prejudices, and even their Christianity only seemed to add to their points of difference.—*Eccles. Hist.* ii. c. 2, 20.

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Mellitus had preached the Gospel with success in Essex, and was ordained bishop of the East Saxons. Justus was ordained bishop of Rochester. Laurentius soon learnt, that the customs of the Britons in regard to the festival of Easter, and other matters, were the customs of the Christians in Scotland and Ireland. So near are the shores of the west of Scotland to those of the north of Ireland, that what those countries possessed, even at that time, they possessed very much in common; and the Irish and Scots are in consequence frequently spoken of as the same people. Persuasive letters were addressed by Laurentius and his brethren to the Britons, the Scots, and the Irish, urging that they should conform to usages said to be those of the universal church. But the nonconformists do not appear to have been moved by these expostulations.*

Religious reaction in several states.

In 610 Mellitus was present at a council in Rome, convened by Boniface IV. In that assembly there was much consultation on the affairs of Britain; and Mellitus returned the bearer of documents intended to cement the relations between the Anglo-Saxon Church and the See of Rome.† But six years later, Ethelbert died. Eadbert, his son, married his father's widow. The Christian clergy protested against this incestuous proceeding. The new religion, in consequence, was no longer in favour with the crown or the court. Idolatry was introduced anew. Among the East Saxons, also, the death of the king brought with it a similar revolution. All that had seemed to be gained now appeared to be lost. The clergy began to seek refuge in Gaul. In Essex, some time passed before any reaction took place. But Eadbert soon learnt to confess his error, and the Christian order of things in Kent was restored.‡

In Northumbria, a similar conversion, was followed

* *Eccles. Hist.* ii. c. 4. † Ibid. lib. ii. c. 4.
‡ *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 616. Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* lib. ii. c. 5, 6.

by a similar reaction. The queen of king Edwin was a daughter of Ethelbert, and a Christian. It had been stipulated, on her marriage, that Paulinus, a Christian bishop, should be a part of her household. Edwin himself at length became a Christian, and multitudes of his people followed his example. The East Anglians imitated the Northumbrians. Idolatry in both kingdoms seemed passing away. But the pagan power of Mercia prevailed over the Christian power of Northumbria. Edwin perished in battle. Suddenly everything Christian seemed to give place to the return of the old superstitions.*

Restoration of Christianity in Northumbria.

The year in which Edwin fell was designated in after times the unhappy year, so memorable was it to the Northumbrians from its crimes and its sufferings. At the close of it Oswald became king. During the last reign Oswald had been in exile, and, in common with many of his friends, had found an asylum among the Christian brotherhood of Iona. He had there become a Christian, and on ascending the throne of Northumbria was desirous of seeing the Christian religion restored to its place among his subjects. For assistance to this end he looked, not to Rome, nor to Canterbury, but, as was natural, to his former teachers in Iona.

Account of Iona.

There is a point of land on the coast of Argyleshire called the Island of Mull. To the distant mariner it appears like a part of the main land, projecting some thirty miles into the sea, the river constituting it an island, being, as in the case of the Isle of Thanet, inland and invisible. At a distance of not more than half a mile from the extreme point of Mull is an island, of not more than three miles in length, and about a mile and a half in breadth. This island once bore the name of 'Druid's Island.' It has since been known by the name of Icolmkill, which means the

* *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 627. Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* ii. c. 9 et seq. Malms. *de Reg.* i. c. 3.

island of Columba's cell: and Icolmkill has been softened in more recent times into Iona. It is supposed that the Druids driven from Mona found an asylum in this place. But towards the close of the sixth century its sacredness came from its Christian, and not from its Druid residents. Its existing monuments are all of a date some centuries later than the age now under consideration.

St. Columba.

Of St. Columba two memoirs, substantially trustworthy, have been preserved. In common with many men who rose to his kind of eminence in those ages, he was of noble family. He was connected by many ties both with Ireland and Scotland. His settlement in Iona, at the head of the humble brotherhood who submitted to his authority, dates from 654. The men were twelve in number, and the boat which bore them from Ireland was of rude construction, and covered with ox-hides. But the history of this man and of his disciples, is the history of men honestly separated to the pursuit and communication of religious knowledge. They dwelt in structures formed of rough-hewn wood, and covered with reeds. Everything pertaining to their condition was in keeping with such appearances. Nevertheless they sent off fraternities to settle in different parts of Scotland and Ireland, and every such settlement was a centre from which missionaries went abroad to strengthen the faith of Christians, and to attempt the conversion of the heathen still left in the land. They possessed many books, laboured hard to multiply them by transcription, and great was the value they set on them. What learning the age possessed was in their keeping; and the authority they assigned to the Scriptures, and the devout spirit in which they studied them, were most exemplary.*

* Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* iii. c. i.–iv. Adaman, *Vita Columb.* Cumin, *Vita Columb.* Pinkerton, *Vita Antiquæ Sanctorum. Chron. Sax.* A.D. 565.

Aidan—the apostle of Northumbria.

When Oswald solicited spiritual help from his former friends in Iona, they sent to him Aidan, described by Bede as a bishop, and as 'a man of singular 'meekness, piety, and moderation.' Aidan chose Lindisfarne, the spot now known by the name of 'Holy Island,' off the coast of Northumberland, as his residence. The king, says Bede, 'humbly and 'willingly gave ear in all cases to his admonitions, 'and applied himself most sedulously to build and ex- 'tend the church of Christ in his kingdom. So that 'when the bishop, who did not perfectly understand 'the English tongue, preached the Gospel, it was 'most delightful to see the king himself interpreting 'the Word of God to those about him; for he had 'perfectly learned the language of the Scots during 'his long banishment. From that time many from 'the region of the Scots came daily into Britain, and 'preached the Word with great earnestness to those 'provinces of the English over which king Oswald 'presided. Churches were built; people joyfully 'flocked together to hear the Word; possessions were 'given by the bounty of the king to build monasteries; 'the English youth were instructed by these Scottish 'masters; and great care was bestowed on the dis- 'cipline of the church.'*

Aidan, it seems, was not the first man sent in answer to the call of Oswald. But a brother named Corman, to whom this apostleship was first assigned, returned to Iona in despair, describing the Northumbrians as too barbarous and stubborn to be brought under the influence of the Gospel. The brethren listened with disappointment and sorrow to these tidings. Presently a voice from the crowd said, 'Brother, the 'fault has been with you. You have not borne with 'the slowness and perverseness of your hearers as you 'should have done. You should have administered 'the milk of a more gentle doctrine, until, being suffi-

* Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* iii. c. 3. Malms. *de Reg.* iii. c. 3.

'ciently nurtured by such means, their minds might 'have been raised by degrees to higher truths.' It was felt that the speaker had given the true interpretation. The office was now devolved on the man who had so spoken, and the speaker was Aidan. The issue justified the choice. Aidan became the apostle of Northumbria. He traversed its length and breadth on foot, with no other aid than his wallet and his staff. To convert the pagan, to teach the ignorant, to comfort the suffering, to befriend the poor, were the objects to which his life was devoted, with a spirit of self-sacrifice of rare occurrence even among good men. So thoroughly did Oswald second the zeal of Aidan, that both have their place as saints in the Roman calendar.*

The Heptarchy is converted to the profession of Christianity.

Oswald married a daughter of Cynegils, the king of Wessex, and his influence contributed probably, as much as the preaching of Birinus, to bring the West Saxons to join the Christian states of the Heptarchy. This was in 635. Dorchester in Oxfordshire was the first bishopric in Wessex. In the same year the East Saxons returned to the profession of Christianity. In 665 the powerful kingdom of Mercia renounced idolatry. Penda, pagan and ferocious as he may have been, did not obstruct the preaching of the Gospel in his dominions. But his son Penda became a Christian, and married a Christian princess, Alchfleda, a daughter of Oswy of Northumbria. When Penda received baptism, his thanes, and his subjects generally, conformed to the new worship. These events left Sussex the only country adhering to the old religion; and there it was renounced in 685, under the preaching of an able Saxon ecclesiastic, Wilfrid, the ostentatious and litigious bishop of York.†

It will be seen, then, that the northern half of

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* Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* iii. Malms. *de Reg.* Matt. West.

† *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 635–655. Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* iii. c. 7 et seq. Malms. *de Reg.* i. c. 3. Matt. Westmin. A.D. 678.

The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons only partially of Roman origin.

Anglo-Saxon Britain was brought to the profession of Christianity by the direct or indirect influence of the disciples of Columba. Through Bernicia and Deira, the influence of the Scottish missionaries extended to East Anglia, to Mercia, and even to Wessex. Gratitude is due to pope Gregory, and to the ecclesiastics sent forth by him to this country. Their intentions were generous, and their labours in a great degree successful. But had no thought of Britain ever occupied the mind of the pious Gregory, or of the monk Augustine, it is clear that Britain would have been evangelized. Had the work been left to the brotherhood of Iona, it would have been done. In the absence, however, of papal interference, the field would not have been left to the Scots. The proximity of our southern coast to Gaul, would have invited missionaries from that quarter. Success by such agency would, of course, have brought with it relations to Rome, and nothing could have prevented the Anglo-Saxon Church from becoming a part of the great ecclesiastical system of Europe in the Middle Age. It is a fact, however, and a fact not sufficiently remembered by Englishmen, that the conversion of our Saxon ancestors to Christianity is not so much due to Roman missionaries as to missionaries from another quarter. It was largely realized by other labourers, and it would have been completed by those labourers, had the work been allowed to remain in their hands.

Causes favourable to that event —change of country.

The mere change of country, in the experience of the Anglo-Saxons, was unfavourable to the continuance of the same religion. Time is necessary to give sanctity to places. Their power to awe the imagination comes not from what they are, so much as from the shadows of the past which hover about them. All such places have their real or supposed histories, and those histories people the thoughts of the worshippers with images of the bygone. No new forest, in any new region of the earth, could have affected the mind of the Saxon, or of the Dane, as their own German, or

Scandinavian groves had affected them. To have left the ancient homes of their gods must have been felt at times like leaving their worship altogether. In the new country, the groves, the temples, the very images of the gods, would all be new; and the effect of all this novelty must have been, in many cases, a speedy and perceptible abatement of faith in their old divinities. With rude heathen nations, the idea has always been prevalent, that the earth is parcelled out among gods as among men, and that the gods proper to a country are those which have been in a sense naturalized to it. There would grow up by degrees, accordingly, both with Saxon and Dane, a feeling that their change of country might naturally bring with it some change in religion. They had now ceased to be sea-kings. The generation soon grew up to whom industrial and settled habits were familiar—the rearing of cattle, and the tilling of the ground. Some taste for a more regular and civilized life was thus induced. In such things, even the Britons were capable of becoming the teachers of the Saxons. It is at this season, so favourable to change, that the Christian religion crosses their path; and this religion comes to them as that of the most powerful and civilized peoples of their own time and of past time. Some of the monuments of that civilization they had seen. But the rumour of what might be seen on the shores of the Mediterranean, where all the civic greatness of past ages seemed to have become tributary to the religious faith of the present, suggested comparisons which could hardly fail to awaken a wholesome suspicion in regard to the claims of their own faith. It was the destiny of all the northern nations, to despise the civilization of the south for a season, and then to adopt it.

Bede relates an incident showing how readily the Saxons learnt to contemn their sacred places in this country. When the Gospel was first preached in Northumbria, Coifi, the high-priest, urged the king

to embrace it, declaring that he was himself satisfied that the gods they worshipped were imaginary. To testify his sincerity, he proffered to be himself the man who should first defy and profane the objects they had been wont to fear and to hold sacred. The Saxon priest was not to bear arms, nor even to mount a horse; but Coifi called for a horse and spear, and before the king, and the crowd of courtiers and people, he rode up to the entrance of the temple, and threw his spear with such force across the sacred enclosure, that it entered the opposite wall. Many of the people looked on with astonishment, expecting to see the god avenge the insult. But no sign followed; and they then did the bidding of the priest, in aiding to demolish the idol and his sanctuary.*

Suspension of theological controversy.

It was another advantage on the side of those who had to commend the Gospel to the heathen men in Anglo-Saxon Britain, that in their time the great era of theological controversy had reached its close. Nothing need be said here with regard to those subtle distinctions concerning the Divine Nature by which, not only the churches, but the nations, of the East and West were so often shaken, through several centuries. The Christianity embraced by all the northern nations who had descended southward, with the sole exception of the Franks, had been Arian Christianity. But before the mission of Augustine, Spain, the last of the Arian kingdoms, had signified its adhesion to the Catholic creed.†

Resemblances between the Teuton and the Christian faith.

Of course, the orthodox doctrine did not preclude the teacher of Christianity from giving an impressive prominence to the unity and supremacy of God. Tacitus, and other authorities, allege that the more ancient creed of the Teutonic race embraced a lofty monotheism. If such was the fact, it is reasonable to suppose that this doctrine was not wholly lost among the

* Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* ii. c. 13.

† Neander, *Eccles. Hist.* Milman's *History of Latin Christianity*, ii. 269, 270.

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Saxons and the Northmen; and those among them who retained any hold on this truth, would not only be among the most likely to listen to the claims of the Gospel, but the most likely to influence others in its favour. Those who had learnt to look upwards with awe to one Illimitable Nature as over all, would here find their highest conceptions realized and surpassed.* The One Existence, and whose All-presence the interminable forest, the boundless plain, or the mystery of space, was supposed to represent, would be to them no longer as an 'Unknown God.' The custom of ascribing the attributes of almost every other god to Woden was, as we believe, a deteriorated form of this great truth.

The old faith becomes powerless.

The priest Coifi, mentioned before, says, 'I have 'been persuaded long since that we worship what has 'no existence. The more diligently I have sought 'truth in that direction, the less have I found it.'† This doubt and inquietude, we may suppose, was much more common in those times than history has reported. It was natural it should be felt as the northern darkness came under the influence of the southern light. Error was exposed. The mind was so far prepared to receive truth. When Edwin, king of Northumbria, consulted his thanes on the question of granting a hearing to a Christian teacher, an aged man was heard to say, 'To me, O king, the 'life we now live, in comparison to that which is 'unknown to us, is like the swift flight of a sparrow 'through the hall in which you are seated at your 'meat during a wintry night. The fire burns in the 'midst. The room is warmed thereby. Storms of 'rain and snow rage abroad. The sparrow enters at 'the one door, and soon departs at the other. Whilst 'within he is safe for his little season, but he soon 'passes away into the dark winter whence he came.

* Tacitus, *Germania*, ix. Mallet, *North. Ant.* c. iv.

† Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* ii. c. 13.

'So to me is the life of man. He comes for a short 'space. But of what went before, or what is to fol- 'low, we are wholly in ignorance. If this new doc- 'trine can give us some certainty on such matters, it 'is fitting we should hear it and submit to it.' The historian adds, that many elders and king's councillors spoke to the same effect.* We may be sure that Northumbria was not singular in possessing men among its 'elders' and 'councillors' influenced by such thoughts. The effect of Christianity on such minds was to conduct them from doubt to certainty.

The new faith was not pure.

But this change was not a transition from error to unmixed truth. Christianity gave these Teutons a priesthood in the place of that which they were to abandon, and a sacrifice for sin in place of those which they were to offer no longer. But this priesthood had diverged considerably from its primitive model, and this sacrifice took with it ideas and adjuncts unknown in the purer ages of the church. Still, that religion should have its ministers separated to their office, and vested with some dignity and authority; and that sin should be expiated by sacrifice, were Teutonic ideas, which were rather purified and elevated, than superseded, by Christianity. It was, moreover, quite in harmony with German thinking that the Supreme Being should not be the immediate object of approach in worship. The humanity of Christ was to the Saxon, the sum of all teaching as to what man should be. It was, also, to him, a manifestation of all he could need to know, in regard to the moral character of the Creator. But even this softened presentation of the Divine through the human, did not embrace enough of the descending element to meet all the cravings of the religious spirit. Hence the worship of the Virgin. The pity of woman was thought to be more likely to yield to entreaty than the pity of man, even that of the best of men—of the One Perfect Man. For the

* Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* ii. c. 13.

man in this case is not merely a man. His nature is Divine as well as Human. Hence even the humanity of the Redeemer came to be regarded as too pure, too awful, too widely separated from our frail nature, to be approached without fear. In this manner the way was prepared for the worship, not only of the Virgin, but of the whole host of saintly mediators which have their place in the Roman calendar. To worship Deity through humanity was felt to be the only possible worship; and the less the humanity should be removed from our own actual experiences the better, so there might be goodness enough to pity, and power enough to help.

With the authority of revelation in their favour, Christians should have known how to dispense with the services of these subordinate mediators. But the tendency of human nature is everywhere towards the mythology and worship which have their full development in polytheism.

Old and new faith showed the same respect for women.

One feature of the new religion must have served to commend it strongly to the acceptance of the Teutonic races—its respect for the character of woman. The women of the Germans often dwelt in camps with their husbands. Their children were born and educated amidst the spectacles and dangers of war. Even among the pirate hordes of Scandinavia, all the better elements of the chivalry known in a later age in Europe may be found, imbued with some loftier qualities, which our later chivalry was too Asiatic in its texture to embrace. Among the Teutonic nations, women were the companions and equals of the men, not the mere instruments of their pleasures. The strong feeling of the Asiatic is short-lived. He soon learns to dispense with his toy when obtained. Even the Greeks and Romans knew little of the Germanic sentiment in this respect. The penalties with which the northern nations guarded the chastity of women, and the worship shown by them towards virgins who remained such for religious reasons, is known from

many sources besides the *Germania* of Tacitus. Nothing seemed to them so fitting, as an expression of the religious spirit, as the consecration of women to its service. In the East, the highest function of religion—inspiration, was almost confined to men. In the north of Europe the rule was reversed. The highest gifts there came upon women. The Veleda of Tacitus had her successors among the believers in the *Edda*. In all this we see a state of mind disposing the Saxon and the Dane to accept the prescribed worship of the Virgin, and to conform to a system which raised female piety to the place of the saint and intercessor, awarding the highest praise to those who chose virginity in this life, that they might rise to the higher purity of the next.*

Similar tendency in regard to objects of worship.

Naturally allied with the worship of saints was the worship of angels. Natural, too, was it, that the worship of the good among created natures, should be connected with fear of the evil among them. The mythology which brought benignant natures into near connexion with human affairs for benevolent ends, would be sure to bring malignant natures into action for ends not benevolent. Heathenism, creature worship, has always presented these two aspects. In this view, the Christianity of the seventh century had become too nearly assimilated to the false religions to which it should have been opposed, and which it should have superseded. As the long disputes of the church concerning the nature of the Deity came to an end, men seemed to fall into the habit of thinking less and less of the presence of the Divine Being, and appear to see the government of mundane things as if left more and more in the hands of these subordinate agencies. Hence the spiritual revolution accomplished by the Christianity of this period was much more limited and imperfect than it should have been.

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* Tacit. *Germ.* viii.–xi. *Hist.* iv. 16. Mallet, *North. Antiq.* c. viii.–xi.

Three great results involved in this Revolution of Religion.

In the conflict which came up between the heathenism of the Saxon and the Dane and this form of Christianity, three great results are observable. The first consists in the class of facts presented in the character and history of the more ambitious of the Anglo-Saxon clergy, who became intent on raising their order to the position of a new power in the state. The second, in such facts as had their origin in the ascetic spirit of the ecclesiastical system of the period. The third, in such effects as served to show the great gain to humanity from the displacing of the heathen faith by the Christian, notwithstanding the evils arising from the two sources above named.

Rise of priestly power in the Anglo-Saxon church.

Where the supreme power is strong and arbitrary, whether in rude communities, or in a civilized despotism, the power of the ministers of religion has been commonly felt as a needful check on its excesses. Barbarian chiefs trusting to their sword, or monarchs living in the midst of the splendours and flatteries of an Asiatic sovereignty, have been disposed to look with less apprehension on the power of the priest, than on power as existing elsewhere. To listen to the expostulations of a priest has been felt as detracting nothing from their greatness, inasmuch as the voice of the priest might be the voice of the authority whence that of kings themselves is supposed by such men to have been derived. But the strength of the priest must be simply moral or spiritual strength; and the contests arising between sovereign and priest, accordingly, must often seem to be maintained between belligerents whose resources are very unequal. But if the clergy were bound to feel that their weapons were not carnal, they could readily persuade themselves that what they might not do by force, they were at liberty to accomplish by such other means as were at their command. Here, as everywhere, craft came to be very largely the refuge of the weak against the strong.*

* Heeren, *Researches:* Persia, c. ii.; Egypt, app. § iv.

Here too, as everywhere, the apparent necessity for availing themselves of such means, seemed to change the nature of the means. The disingenuous, the false, often ceased to appear as they had been wont to appear. That there are circumstances in which ends sanctify means, is a maxim which had been received and acted upon very widely long before Rome, ecclesiastical or civil, came into existence. This inversion of moral feeling in the governed, is one of the effects sure to be produced by a harsh and arbitrary sway on the part of those who govern.

In comparison with the barbarian chiefs who led the warriors of the north southward, the Christian clergy whom they encountered in these new regions might seem to be utterly powerless. But these clergy were the ministers of the God of these new regions; and whether attempting to convert the barbarous strangers, or to influence their conduct when converted, these men always spoke in the name of their God. It was natural, in such circumstances, that the clergy should be disposed to magnify their office. It was the one instrument by which they might hope to protect themselves, and those who looked up to them as protectors.*

Policy of the Mediæval clergy not wholly unreasonable or insincere.

Motives arising from this source—motives by no means wholly selfish, or wholly insincere—prompted the clergy to give their sanction in so large a measure to the popular faith in miracles. Many of them must have been aware that this credulity of the people was often grossly abused. But it can hardly be doubted that the clergy themselves were firm believers in the

* Ethelbert, the first Anglo-Saxon king who professed Christianity, was induced to make the penalty for wrong done to church property twelve times greater than was provided against the same wrongs as done to the property of the laity; and to the latest period in Anglo-Saxon history the difference in favour of the church was as seven to one. So of the private possessions of churchmen—the penalties which guarded the property of the bishop were elevenfold, the priests ninefold, the deacons sixfold.—*Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, i. 393.

perpetuity of miraculous powers in the church. Every reader of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* must derive this impression from it. Such men could not of course be insensible to the value of such apparent attestations to their own authority, and would not be much inclined to disturb the popular belief by indulging in doubtful criticism on such matters. Heathen priests everywhere laid claim to prophecy and miracle. They made the interference of their gods in human affairs to be perpetual. They pointed to a hereafter of happiness or the contrary as awaiting those whom they were wont themselves to pronounce as worthy or unworthy. The Christian clergy had to deal with these pretensions. They did so by claiming miraculous powers for the church; by bringing many supernatural agencies into the concerns of this world; and too often by materializing heaven and hell to the extent deemed necessary adequately to affect the hopes and fears of the society about them. How far they were themselves deceived in making such representations cannot now be determined. But in the prevalence of such beliefs and feelings they found the machinery of their power, and freely and skilfully did they avail themselves of such appliances. The help of this kind which they needed came; and by means of it, in great part, they were to become a new power, in the state of things which followed upon the new settlement of the northern nations.

The Confessional.

In prosecuting this policy the Anglo-Saxon clergy, in common with their order over Europe, made a free use of the confessional, and of their supposed authority to absolve delinquents from their sins, and to dispense the gifts of grace. Documents have come down to our time which show, that not only the common sins of the people, but all the secret and imaginary forms of vice, had been reduced to a system, that the confessor might be adequately prepared for the discharge of his office. Secret things belonging to personal history, to family history, to all history, were

thus to be laid open; and vices which had never entered the thoughts of the penitent, were thus made familiar to the imagination by the questionings of the priest. With these almost endless distinctions of evil, came a scheme of penalties of almost endless elaboration. In some of these penalties we may trace a concern for the sincere restoration of the offender; but in the many fiscal exactions which were made, if some care was shown for the poor, there was no want of care for the church and the clergy.* At the same time, it was zealously inculcated, that without confession there could be no absolution, and that without absolution there could be no fitness to partake of the communion—no salvation.† Of course the Roman clergy brought this scheme with them; and the more they were able to free themselves from the presence of the Scottish missionaries, the more easy it became to act on this system in all its parts.

Exaction of church dues.

Concerning some other uses to which this theory of church power was applied, a judgment may be formed from the following canon enacted under king Edgar: 'And we enjoin that the priest remind the 'people of what they ought to do to God for dues 'in tithes, and in other things: first-plough alms, 'fifteen days after Easter; and a tithe of young by 'Pentecost; and of earth-fruits by All-Saints; and '' Romfeoh' by St. Peter's mass; and church-scot by 'Martinmas.'‡ The priest in the Anglo-Saxon church, was required to preach to the people every

* In one of these directories for priests, the penitent, after confessing all remembered sins, of the mind, and the flesh, that nothing may be omitted, is made to say: 'I confess to thee all the sins of my body, of skin, of flesh, and of bones, and of sinews, and of veins, and of gristles, and of tongue, and of lips, and of gums, and of teeth, and of hair, and of marrow, and of everything, soft or hard, wet or dry.'—*Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, 404.

† Ibid. 158, 159, 415.

‡ *Ancient Laws*, 400. For the fines imposed in case of neglect on any of these points, and the mode in which distraint was to be made, see the *Laws of Ethelred*, 147.

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Sunday—we do not know how often his preaching was on such topics.* In regard to the clergy of the Middle Age generally, some excuse should be made, inasmuch as they were shepherds who had to sustain their authority over flocks not always given to obedience.

The clergy among the Anglo-Saxons who made the largest use of these elements of rule, were distinguished by the homage they were disposed to render to the Papal See. They were wise enough to discern the advantage of allying everything of this nature with the *prestige* to be derived from the fame, the splendour, and the authority of Rome. The first man, in the history of the Anglo-Saxon church, who became conspicuous by his zeal in this direction, was Wilfrid, bishop of York.

Wilfrid.

Wilfrid was the son of a wealthy family in Northumbria. He was a man of commanding presence, of good parts, restless and energetic, and withal, we must add, not a little vain and ambitious. With these last qualities, however, he combined a sufficient amount of prudence and self-government to allow of his acquiring considerable reputation as a religious man. His Christian sincerity, indeed, should be conceded. But his passion appears to have been, to associate with the faith he professed as much of secular pomp and authority as might well be brought into such a relation. His principal biographer has disfigured his early life with fictions, and is so manifestly partial, that all statements from that quarter must be accepted with caution.†

In 654 Wilfrid made a journey to Rome. There

* *Ancient Laws*, 400. *Laws of Alfred*, 24. *Laws of Alfred and Gothrum*, 73. *Laws of Edgar*, 114, 146, 156. Some of the laws designed to regulate the conduct of the clergy are curious. Priests, besides their own 'lore,' are required to learn some handicraft. *Monumenta Ecclesiastica*, 396, 400, 447, 448. They were not to be gleemen, hunters, or hawkers, but to apply themselves to their books, and to have orthodox books (398, 400–1, 418). It is enjoined, too, that no priest should take the scholar of another (396). What does this mean?

† Eddius, *Vit. S. Wilfridi*. Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* v. c. 19, et alibi.

the young Saxon was much flattered by persons high in authority, as a man of no ordinary promise. After sitting at the feet of learned men in Rome, and spending several years in some of the principal cities of the Continent, Wilfrid returned a travelled man, to be looked upon with wonder by many of his homely countrymen.

The first grateful return made by Wilfrid for the favour shown to him in Rome, was in opposing himself to the Scottish clergy on the question about the time of keeping Easter, and on some other matters. This question about Easter was attended by some material inconveniences. In the family of the king of Northumbria, for example, the queen, who had been educated in Kent, followed the Roman custom, and might be seen humbling herself as in Lent, while her husband, who followed his Scottish instructors, might be quite otherwise employed, because with him the season for humiliation had given place to the season for rejoicing.

The debates at Whitby.

It was, accordingly, deemed expedient that a meeting of the two parties should be convened, that so this diversity of usage might, if possible, be brought to an end. The parties met at Whitby. Wilfrid, accompanied by the bishop of Paris, and other distinguished men, took the Romanist side. Colman, bishop of Lindisfarne, and his Scottish brethren, pleaded the authority of the line of tradition, through Anatolius and Columba, to the Apostle John. To the authority of Columba Wilfrid opposed that of St. Peter, 'to 'whom the keys of heaven had been given.' Here the king interposed to ask, 'Is it so; do you admit 'that St. Peter has the keys of heaven?' Colman, it is said, replied in the affirmative. 'Then I decide for St. 'Peter,' said the king, 'as I know not what the con-'sequence may be of doing otherwise.'

This matter being settled thus summarily, the tonsure question remained. The Scottish brethren shaved the hair from the front of their head in the form of a crescent.

The Romans removed it from the crown of the head in the form of a circle. On this weighty matter the king was silent. But Wilfrid urged the authority of St. Peter for the tonsure, as for the keeping of Easter, and insisted that the monks of Iona must have borrowed their usage from Simon Magus.* One thing is clear, if Wilfrid did not bring much learning to this discussion, he brought an abundance of effrontery and dogmatism. From this time the Roman custom gained ground, and at no distant day became general. Colman relinquished his bishopric and returned to Iona.

Not long after this discussion at Whitby, Wilfrid was chosen bishop of York. But, unhappily, of all the bishops then in England, one only was found to be free from the schismatic taint of the Scots in the matter of Easter and the tonsure—a fact which suggests much in regard to the extent of the field which had been covered by the labours of the Scots in England down to this period. In this difficulty, Wilfrid resolved to seek ordination in France. At Compiègne, the zeal of the Saxon ecclesiastic in the cause of the true Catholic discipline was honoured by the presence of twelve prelates at his consecration. The gilded chair in which Wilfrid was placed, was borne aloft by the same number of episcopal hands—no person of a lower dignity being allowed to touch it. So gratifying to the stranger were these marks of esteem, that a long interval passed, it is said three years, before his return. In the meanwhile another had been appointed to his see. But one of the first things done by Theodore, the new archbishop of Canterbury, was to secure the re-election of Wilfrid to the see of York.†

His disputes with Egfrid and Theodore.

In this position the bishop found means to gratify his taste for splendour, and by his novel achievements in architecture, in decoration, and in other matters of ecclesiastical pageantry, he filled the country with talk

* Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* iii. c. 25.

† Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* iii. c. 27. Eddius, c. xii.

and wonder. Even the king and the court, it was said, were overshadowed by the bishop and his cathedral. But with tastes of this description, Wilfrid could blend, upon occasion, a monastic severity of manners. He well knew, as all sagacious churchmen have known, how to make these opposite elements work towards one result.

Ethelreda, the queen of Egfrid of Northumbria, had made a vow of virginity. It is said that a former husband had respected that vow. Wilfrid, in his function as a priest, decided that Egfrid ought to respect it, and went so far as to favour the escape of the queen to a convent. Egfrid deeply resented this proceeding. Ercemburga, whom he afterwards married, regarded Wilfrid with a still deeper aversion. She pointed to his buildings, his lands, his hospitalities, and his followers and retainers, and to all as showing that the man who could play the monk so demurely, when that mood might avail him, was resolved on being accounted the greatest in the land, the king not excepted.*

Theodore of Canterbury was a Greek of Tarsus, who, at the request of the king of Kent, had been chosen by the pope to fill that see. He became intent on adjusting the affairs of the Anglo-Saxon churches, so as to secure conformity throughout the Heptarchy to the authority and usage of the see of Canterbury. In prosecution of this object he assembled a council at Hertford, and proceeded to divide large bishoprics into smaller, both in East Anglia and in Mercia. His next step was to do the same with the bishopric of York.† Resistance had been made to

* Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* iv. c. 19, 20. *Historia Eliensis*, i. 26. Mabill. *Act. SS. Ord. S. Bened.* ii. 711. It is singular that Eddius speaks of Wilfrid as having a son. No reproach was cast on him on this account. We must suppose, therefore, that his son was born in wedlock. But when did he marry? Scarcely *before* he was a priest. We know nothing, however, of his wife.

† Pope Gregory had urged that the bishoprics of the Anglo-Saxons should be divided so as to be small. Bede, in his well-known epistle to Egbert, urges the same thing.

what was done in East Anglia and Mercia; but two malcontent prelates had been deposed by the firm hand of the metropolitan. Wilfrid protested against the contemplated change in his diocese. Egfrid and Theodore insisted on submission. To their amazement Wilfrid signified his intention to take the case to the Papal See, and to seek judgment upon it there. This was to pour oil upon the flame. That the pope might advise, or counsel, in regard to ecclesiastical matters in England, or elsewhere, was understood. But that he should be appealed to in this manner, as an authority, and an authority beyond and above both king and metropolitan, was regarded in this country at that time, as a piece of extravagant presumption, bordering upon treason.*

Wilfrid appeals to Rome.

Wilfrid, however, was better versed than his opponents in the precedents and maxims of the papacy in relation to such cases. He knew that such acknowledgments of the appellant jurisdiction which the see of Rome was aiming to consolidate, were always welcome in that quarter. In fact, the principles involved in this appeal were to be the ground of controversies between the papal see and the crowned heads of Europe through centuries to come. Messengers were sent, it is said, to Theodoric, king of the Franks, and to Embroin, mayor of the palace, to arrest Wilfrid on his way, and to put his followers to the sword. Wilfrid's biographer assures us, on the other hand, that the bishop left England on this errand amidst the tears of many thousands of his monks.

But the elements favoured the escape of the delinquent prelate. The vessel in which he embarked was driven on the coast of Friesland. The pagan Frisians, and the Christian bishop thus cast upon their shores, spoke the same language. Wilfrid, with the versatile power, and the love of action, which characterized him, gave himself to the work of a mis-

* Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* iv. c. 3, 4.

sionary among these people. The influence he acquired over them by his preaching, and by the interest which he evinced in their affairs, disposed him to extend his stay among them nearly twelve months. The fisheries of the year proved unusually successful. The grateful people attributed this to the coming of the stranger, and to the Good Being whose minister he was. The man who had contributed to give his Northumbrian countrymen, in place of their buildings of wood covered with reeds and thatch, edifices of stone covered with lead, and protected and adorned with glass; who, when opening the church he had built at Ripon, a building constructed of smoothed stone, with its aisles formed by lofty columns, might be seen standing on the steps of the altar, and heard reading over, in the presence of king and nobles, and of a wondering crowd of people, descriptions of lands assigned to that church, and of other lands in that district once assigned to sacred uses when the Britons who dwelt there were Christians, and in effect claiming that those lands should be restored—the man, in short, who, in his policy and bearing, seemed to anticipate all that the great churchmen in after ages were to become in our history, is the man who may now be seen inspecting the nets of the Frisian fishermen, seated in the huts of their humble families, or gathering about him the king, and the chiefs, and the people of that rude land, that he might preach to them the Universal Fatherhood of the One True God, and the coming of his Son to die for man's salvation.* In this honourable service Wilfrid was the precursor of Wilbrord, and Boniface, and other English missionaries, who did so much to bring Germany under the influence of Christianity.

Two years passed before Wilfrid presented himself

* Eddius, c. xvi. xvii. It is proper to state, that in his architectural achievements, Wilfrid had been anticipated in a good degree, and in a much less ostentatious manner, by Benedict Biscop, the founder of Wearmouth Abbey.—Bede, *Vitæ Ab.*

BOOK II. CHAP. 7. to the pope, and obtained the decision of a Roman synod in his favour. Armed with the decree of pope Agatho and his synod, which doomed the layman to perdition, the ecclesiastic to deprivation, who should dare to resist it, Wilfrid returned to England. But the time when papal thunder should be terrible had not come. Theodore heeded it not. Egfrid treated it with derision. Wilfrid was thrown into prison, and placed in solitary confinement. Released, after a while, he would have sought an asylum in Mercia or in Wessex. But the queen of Mercia was a sister of Egfrid; the queen of Wessex was a sister of Ercemburga. It was in these circumstances that Wilfrid turned his footsteps towards Sussex, and sought the home among pagans which seemed to be denied him among Christians.

We might have supposed that the country of the South Saxons would have been one of the last to prove attractive to the exiled bishop. For it had happened that, on his way from France, after the extravagant ceremony of his ordination, Wilfrid was wrecked on the coast of Sussex. The people along that coast were wont to claim all that fell into their hands from shipwreck as lawful spoil, seizing the property as their own, and selling the people as slaves. The vessel was stranded, but the crew resolved to defend themselves to the last. Wilfrid and his attendant ecclesiastics encouraged the seamen in their purpose by exhortations, and by loud prayer for their success. But the pagans had their spiritual weapons as well as the Christians. Upon a rising ground opposite them was the pagan priest, using his enchantments and calling upon his gods. But in the fray, a stone from a sling entered the head of the priest, and he fell dead. The sailors had bravely repulsed the wreckers in three onsets, when the tide rose, the wind became favourable, the vessel floated, and was again to sea.

Wilfrid, in now looking towards Sussex, was aware that, though the people were pagans, the king and

queen had received baptism as Christians. There was also a feeble colony of Scottish monks at Boshun, near Chichester. But nothing effectual had been done towards converting the people. The preaching of Wilfrid was a new thing among them. He taught them, moreover, many useful arts along with the doctrines of the Gospel. In a time of great dearth he instructed them in fishing, so as to give them a new and unexpected supply of their wants. In gratitude for these services, Selsey—the Isle of Seals—was assigned to him as a residence; and in that place he exercised his functions as a bishop over a considerable body of clergy for five years.*

His preaching in Sussex.

Subsequently, Wilfrid prosecuted his labours as an evangelist in the Isle of Wight, under the favour of Ceadwalla, who had become possessed of the throne of Wessex. But death removed archbishop Theodore. Egfrid of Northumbria fell in battle. Aldfrid, his son, restored Wilfrid to his see. Still the troubles of Wilfrid were not at an end. Aldfrid had been educated in the school of Iona. Wilfrid's reverence for the papacy, and passion for prelatical magnificence, had increased rather than diminished. Aldfrid was disposed to check these tendencies; and on his attempting to elevate Ripon into a bishopric, Wilfrid resisted, and again fell into disgrace.

In a national council assembled at Eastonfield, the refractory prelate was called upon to express his unqualified submission to certain constitutions drawn up by the late archbishop Theodore. Wilfrid, so self-governed and genial in his manner towards inferiors, betrayed on this occasion the haughty and passionate temper natural to him. He expressed his surprise that the council should think of placing the authority of archbishop Theodore, a branded schismatic, before that of the pope; censured his accusers as having incurred the guilt of resisting the judgment of the

Council of Eastonfield.

* Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* iv. c. 13, 19. Eddius.

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Roman see for now more than twenty years; and recounting what he had done to bring the churches of the different states into a nearer relation to that great centre of ecclesiastical unity, he told them emphatically that his case should again be submitted to that tribunal for decision. Nor were these empty words. Though seventy years of age, Wilfrid again presented himself in Rome, and again judgment was given in his favour. But the words of king Aldfrid were, 'For 'no writing, coming as ye say from the apostolic 'chair, will I consent to alter one word of a sentence 'that has been agreed to by myself, the archbishop, 'and the dignities of this land.' On the death of Aldfrid, however, many influences were employed to bring about the restoration of Wilfrid to his see. This was at length accomplished. He died shortly after, at the age of seventy-six.*

Significance of the life of Wilfrid.

The life of Wilfrid would be of small interest if it concerned himself alone. But it is highly illustrative of his age. It shows how great was the influence of the Scottish missionaries among the Christian states of the Heptarchy; how foreign to the notions of the Anglo-Saxons of that day was that appellant jurisdiction in the Roman see, so boldly insisted on in later times; how early the type of the ruling churchman of the Middle Age—combining the ascetic and the worldly, the patronage of monks with the defiance of crowned heads—began to make its appearance among us; and how soon our rude Germanic forefathers gave evidence of being capable of throwing all their characteristic energy into a new creed, of substituting civilized tastes for those of the barbarian, and the battles of the ecclesiastical leader for those of the old sea-king. The intelligence, refinement, and convictions of the Saxon bishop, as compared with the priest of Saxon paganism, gave him a position which was new in the history of his race; and if we see how

* Eddius, c. 42 et seq. Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* v. c. 19.

these acquisitions were used for evil, we can also see how they were used for good.

Odo and St. Dunstan—monachism in Anglo-Saxon history.

For the next memorable exhibition of the sacerdotal spirit in Anglo-Saxon history, we descend from the age of Wilfrid to that of Odo and Dunstan—two centuries later. To this interval belong some of the most destructive ravages of the Northmen. But to this interval also belong the names of Egbert, and Alfred, and Athelstan. The splendour of the reigns of Athelstan and Edgar was favourable to the aspirations of ecclesiastical ambition.

All the forms of Christianity which obtained a footing in Britain in this early period of its history, included a strong element of monasticism. What we know concerning the monks of Bangor and Iona, presents evidence enough on this point as regards the Britons and the Scots; and the forty monks in the procession of Augustine as he entered into Canterbury, were only an instalment of what was to follow. The rough energy of the Anglo-Saxon was not likely to bow to any system the character and outward signs of which were not strongly marked. With such a people, there was much in the separation and the self-consecration which seemed to be characteristic of the monastic life, to give it impressiveness and power. Hence among those who professed themselves Christians, not a few took up that profession in its severest forms. In this island of the West, as in the crowded cities of the East, the quiet and seclusion of the convent became attractive in the measure in which it was felt that to be in the world was to be in the midst of unsettledness, suffering, and crime. The great multiplication of monasteries in the early history of Anglo-Saxon Christianity resulted largely from such influences. Much delusion no doubt lay under these appearances. We feel obliged to suppose that the firmer and warlike temper of the Anglo-Saxons was unduly diminished by this means, so as to have rendered them unequal to the crisis when compelled to

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stand face to face with the Northmen. Certainly, the impression of the Northmen was, that the new faith of the Saxons had destroyed their old courage, though the occasions were not few in which they were undeceived in that matter. And many who fled to the monastery did not find monks all that they seemed to be. The good expected from such companionships was not always realized. Nevertheless, the influence of the institute was great and enduring. Even the clerks—the secular clergy, as they were called, in distinction from the monks—lived in the places where their first rude cathedrals had made their appearance, much as the monks lived, having all things in common under their bishop. The progress of Christianity soon required that clergymen should be located in parishes; but the bishop always retained a considerable number of clergy with him who lived together, conducted the cathedral service, and went forth under episcopal direction to the discharge of various official duties in the surrounding district. The residents in connexion with our cathedrals to this day give us the form of this old usage without its spirit.*

Marriage among the Anglo-Saxon clergy.

But in the time of Odo and Dunstan, the clergy in England, in common with their brethren over a great part of the Continent, were, many of them, we may perhaps say most of them, married men. At that time, strange as it may sound to modern ears, this might be said of the monks, as well as of the parochial and cathedral priesthood. The monks of St. Benedict, introduced by Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop, took the vow of chastity, as it was called.† But the monks of Wales and of Iona gave no such pledge, and often availed themselves of their liberty to marry. During

* Kemble's *Anglo-Saxons*, books ii. viii.

† Bede, *Vitæ Ab.* Bede, in his epistle to Egbert, gives a sad picture of some of the monasteries in his time. But his zeal on the side of the celibacy of ecclesiastical persons makes his authority less weighty on these points than on some others.

the ninth century the Benedictines were all but annihilated by the swords of the Danes. So that when Dunstan broached his project of reform in the middle of the tenth century, the monks of Glastonbury and Abingdon were the only men of their profession who had bound themselves to a life of celibacy.*

Odo and Dunstan as reformers.

Dunstan has been justly described as the Hildebrand of the Anglo-Saxon church. He resolved, if possible, to force the law of celibacy on all ecclesiastical persons. By this policy, Hildebrand would have severed such persons from all the ties of family and country, and would have substituted in the place of both, a passion for the splendour and power of the church—that is, of the clergy. The aim of Dunstan, a century earlier, if not to the same extent defined and avowed, was to the same effect. He would have merged the patriot and the man in the priest. Edgar, succeeding the unfortunate Edwy, deemed it wise to avail himself of the power of Dunstan and his party. By royal warrant, many of the married clergy were expelled. Bitter strife was diffused from one end of England to the other. But the successes of the reformers were partial only, even in their life-time, and little signs of them were perceptible twenty years after their decease.†

Odo, archbishop of Canterbury, who distinguished himself in this crusade against the married clergy, was a Dane, and had been a military chief. He had become a student and a scholar, but brought not a little of the severe temper which men expect in the camp, into the affairs of the church. Dunstan had been from his youth, and from choice, a monk, and a monk of the greatest zeal in all things monastic. But with the asceticism of the anchorite he combined

* Wharton's *Anglia Sacra*, i. 218. Kemble's *Anglo-Saxons*, book ii. c. viii. Lappenberg, ii. 128 et seq.

† *Laws and Institutes of England.* Edgar's *Laws*, 111–114. Osborn. Eadmer. Malms. *de Reg.* lib. ii. c. 7. *Vita Duns.* Milman's *History of Latin Christianity*, iii. 113–116.

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the ingenuities of the man of science, and the taste, in some degree, of the man of letters. The genius, however, which qualified him to excel as a statesman, and in other secular pursuits, was accounted of value only as it might be made to subserve his policy as a churchman. More than once the secular clergy prevented his elevation from his position as abbot of Glastonbury to a bishopric. But he at length became bishop of Worcester, bishop of London, and archbishop of Canterbury, ending a life in which, according to his biographers, his miracles almost ceased to be such from their frequency, only that his tomb might become still more famous for such prodigies after his death. His name has a conspicuous place among the saints in the Roman calendar.

Story of Edwy and Elgiva.

The conduct of Odo and Dunstan towards Edwy and Elgiva is described in some form in all our histories. Edwy, who was but sixteen years of age on his accession, had married Elgiva, a lady who must have been of noble, if not of royal descent, inasmuch as the marriage was said to have been invalid on the ground of consanguinity. Edwy, it seems, on the day of his coronation, withdrew earlier than was deemed respectful from the table where the bishops and thanes were at their festivity. At the suggestion of Odo, the bishop of Lichfield and the abbot of Glastonbury went in search of the king, whom they found in an apartment with his wife and the females of his family. Edwy was unwilling to return to the drinkers in the hall; upon which Dunstan, himself then but just thirty years of age, seized the king vehemently by the hand, replaced the crown, which he had laid aside, upon his head, and applied offensive names to the females present, who protested against his rudeness. In this manner he forced the young king back to his forsaken seat. It is possible that Edwy had been at fault. But the conduct of Dunstan betrayed so much priestly insolence, that nothing could be more

natural than the deep resentment of the king and his relatives.*

Edwy now called upon Dunstan to produce the treasure which the late king had committed to his trust. Dunstan evaded this demand by quitting the kingdom. The young king, however, was no match for the difficulties which such a quarrel entailed upon him. His measures against the monastic party disposed them to conspire against him in favour of his younger brother Edgar. Mercia and Northumbria were induced to withdraw their allegiance from him. Odo was connected with Wessex, and remained nominally faithful to the king. But he insisted that Elgiva should be put away. The servants of the archbishop forced the unhappy queen from her palace, branded her countenance with hot irons, to efface her beauty, and banished her to Ireland. And we have all heard the rest—that after a short time her beauty was restored; that she returned to England in search of her husband; that at Gloucester she fell again into the hands of the military servants of Odo, who subjected her to cruel mutilation by severing the sinews of her legs; and that a few days later, both king and queen died, from broken-heartedness, or from some foul play which has never come to light.†

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* Malmsbury, ii. 7. *Hist. Rames.* c. 7; Wallingford, 543; and the Cotton. MSS. relating to the history of Abingdon; all speak of Elgiva as the wife of Edwy. The *Saxon Chron.* also says that Odo separated them 'because they were too nearly related'—ad an. 958. According to the biographers of Dunstan, Elgiva was not the wife of Edwy, and they heap all kinds of abuse on that lady and her mother. But with these men a wife within the prohibited degrees would be no wife, and the savage fanaticism with which they write almost puts them out of court. In the language of churchmen in those days all marriages not according to the canons were adulterous.

† *Chron. Sax.* an. 958. Osborn, *de Vita Odonis*, ap. Wharton, lib. i. 84. Flor. Wigorn. an. 959. *Hist. Rames.* c. 14. Malms. *de Pont.* lib. i. 'Rex Westsaxonium Edwinus in pago Gloucestrensi interfectus fuit.'—Turner, from the Cott. MS. *Hist. Anglo-Sax.* ubi supra.

Such deeds could sacerdotalism perpetrate, and perpetrate with impunity, at some junctures in Anglo-Saxon history. Enough has been stated to show how this temper, especially as allied with its great coadjutor monasticism, could make void all the great principles of natural morality, whenever the interests of churchmen might be served by such means. Nothing can exceed the extravagance with which the triumphant party applaud the conduct of Dunstan and Odo, or the inhumanity with which they write concerning the sufferings inflicted on their victims. The insults, the slanders, the mutilations, the murders—all are holy, pre-eminently holy. Odo even acquires the name of Odo 'the Good.'

Edgar, who succeeds his brother, in place of resting in the venial fault of being over-fond of an affectionate wife, fills the land with tales and ballads relating to his amours. The daughters of the best families were liable to be demanded as instruments of his pleasures, even under the roof of their parents. The convent itself was no security against the lawlessness of his passions. Nor did he scruple to use the dagger to avenge himself on the man who interposed between him and such gratifications. But his one virtue, in becoming the tool of an ambitious priesthood, was allowed to cover his multitude of sins.*

The better influences of Christianity over Anglo-Saxon Britain.

It would be easy to multiply instances showing the extent to which that pharisaical tendency which puts the ritual and polity of church organizations before the 'weightier matters of the law,' had found place in the Christian life of the Saxons and Danes in Britain. But we forbear. It will be more agreeable to look to the features of the new life introduced by Christianity which are of a better kind.

The only written laws which have reached us from the Anglo-Saxon period of our history, are laws which have come from kings professing Christianity, and

* Malms. *de Reg.* ii. 8.

acting in conjunction with the Christian clergy.* In justification of an apparent severity in some of these enactments, it may be mentioned, that the weight of penalty is nowhere greater, upon the whole, than in the laws of Alfred.† In many instances, too, we can trace the influence of the clergy in abating rigour in this respect, and in urging from time to time that laws of the severer kind, which it was not deemed expedient to repeal or to amend, should be administered with a humane discretion.‡ Care for the poor and the weak is also to be placed among the unquestionable virtues of the Anglo-Saxon clergy. One-third only of the contributions made professedly to the church was appropriated to their own use. The next third was reserved for the repairs of church buildings, and for the expenses of public worship. The remaining third, or at least a fourth, was assigned to the poor.§ No one can charge these men with being respecters of persons. It was their manner generally to exact the right thing, whether in behalf of thane or serf, of the lord or of his man. The frequent preaching enjoined on the parish priest must have been, with all its faults, a great benefit to the people.‖ The language of such men as Bede, and Egbert, and Elfric, on the duties of the Christian pastor, oblige us to suppose that there were not a few in those times who had learnt to estimate their pastoral work very much according to a scriptural standard. When we find great importance attached to being able to repeat the creed and the paternoster, we may be disposed to think that the Christian intelligence existing among such a people must have been very low. But the fact does not warrant any strong inference of that nature. Such facts occur among ourselves where no such con-

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* *Ancient Laws and Institutions of England*, including laws from Ethelbert to Edward the Confessor.

† Ibid. 27–45. ‡ Ibid. 135, 161, 176, 177, 354.

§ Ibid. 146, 445. ‖ Ibid. 445.

clusion is admissible. On the sacredness of an oath, on the importance of truth-speaking in all things, and on just conduct between man and man, the teaching of the Anglo-Saxon priest was grave, reiterated, and enforced by appeals to the most weighty motives. No thoughtful man will undervalue such influences in their relation to the great interests of society.

Bede.

The venerable Bede, we scarcely need say, may be cited as an example of the Christian life of the better kind among our Saxon ancestors. But even his Christianity had its alloy. His credulity, for such a man, was extraordinary. In his narratives concerning his times, the miraculous is not only so common as to meet you at every step, but it is often so puerile as to deserve to be placed among some of the most contemptible inventions of that nature in church history. He was also considerably infected with the error of his times in regard to the supposed virtues of celibacy; and concerning the intention of married life, and the laws to which it should be subject, even when permitted. Nothing, in fact, can exceed his occasional extravagance on these topics. Those Manichean doctrines, which degrade the domestic and social relations, in the name of religion, were avowed and inculcated by Bede in the worst manner of his day, and he thus contributed his share towards the mischiefs which resulted from them. But on most other matters he expressed himself with great sobriety and good sense. His judgment and his heart were in the main candid and liberal. He differed from the Scottish missionaries, but he did so charitably. He was himself catholic and orthodox, but he appreciates honestly the good to be found in the example or writings of men who were not so accounted. Above all, to his severe labours as a student, he added the feeling of fervent piety—of a piety largely allied with all those virtues which fit men to become benefactors in regard to the things of this life, while fixing their strongest aspirations on another. The character of Bede as before us

in his memorable epistle to his friend archbishop Egbert, exhibits sound sense combined with resolute honesty, and with a deep devoutness of spirit. We can believe that in this type of piety we see that of not a few among our Saxon fathers.

Benedict Biscop, the founder of the abbey at Wearmouth, and the friend and patron of Bede, appears to have been distinguished by all the good qualities which became so conspicuous in his *protégé*. Aidan, if less remarkable as a scholar, was more abundant than either of these good men in the apostolic work of oral teaching, making his voice and presence familiar to the people of the whole space of country extending from Hull to Edinburgh, and from Sunderland to Whitehaven. Nor did the spirit of Aidan die with him. To Egbert, the archbishop of York, Bede could offer counsel on the duties of a Christian prelate of the holiest description, assured that it would not be offered in vain. And while such men prosecuted their various labours at home, many of their countrymen—as Wilbrord, Boniface, Willibald, and Willehad—became distinguished as missionaries abroad. Boniface became the apostle of Germany. Wilbrord taught with success from Friesland to the Rhine. According to Alcuin, no mean authority, Wilbrord was a man of a noble aspect and deportment, of great moderation and prudence, eminently holy and forbearing, of a most persuasive eloquence, and distinguished by courage, patience, and perseverance. Willibald and Willehad were men scarcely less remarkable. But it is in such men as Alfred and Alcuin that we see the fullest influence of Christianity on the Anglo-Saxon mind—piety without asceticism, faith without credulity, the noble in manhood elevated in all things by the pure in religion. Concerning these great men we shall have something more to say elsewhere.

Biscop.

Aidan.

The names we have mentioned may be taken as those of classes representing the great phases of the Christian life in the experience of our Saxon and Danish

ancestors. The sacerdotal, the superstitious, and the truly Christian, all were there—these elements being more distinct and prominent in some, and more variously combined in others. In some instances, the Christianity adopted is manifestly so superstitious, fanatical, and demoralizing, that we are almost disposed to doubt whether it would not have been better that such men should have remained in their old heathenism. But these instances were not common. Speaking generally, the integrity, the benevolence, and the purity realized by the religion of the Cross, were such as the mythology of the Saxon and Northman sea-kings could never have called into existence; and such as in the case of the Alfreds and Alcuins of those days left everything possible from that source at an immeasurable distance. The revolution—intellectual, moral, and spiritual—which was thus accomplished, was great, and pregnant with greater things to come. The Saxon king who deserts the duties of his throne under the plea of becoming religious in a convent; or who could leave his lands exposed to the ravaging of an enemy, that he might do pilgrimage to the shrines of the apostles, shows us how religion may degenerate into superstition, superseding our natural obligations in place of enforcing them. But in the case of a Ceadwalla or a Canute, we may see something beyond and better than superstition, even in these pilgrimages to Rome. It must have been an influence of no feeble sort which taught natures so sternly moulded to bow thus before a new authority, and to learn, as well as to unlearn, on so large a scale. Natural curiosity joined with religious feeling in prompting such men to such pilgrimages; and we may be sure that the result would be, not only to deepen religious impressions, but to widen sympathy with all the objects of civilized life. Rome embraced something more than the Papal see, as did the journey thither and back again.

CHAPTER VIII.

REVOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT IN ANGLO-SAXON BRITAIN.

Relations of chief and follower.

THE heathen life of the Saxons and the Danes, described in the preceding chapter, has shown, in some measure, the nature of the government which obtained among them when they first became known to civilized Europe. We have seen what the Danes were in the ninth century. Such the Saxons had been in the seventh. In their own land the eldest son inherited the property of the family. The fortune of the younger was dependent on the personal qualities which might enable him to attract followers as a pirate and freebooter.

But even in such rude confederations there must be laws. The fundamental law binding the leader and his adherents was substantially that known in later time as binding the chief and his vassal. As the relation between these parties in their piratical excursions was voluntary, it rested of course on mutual stipulations. And when the Saxons ceased to be marauders, and settled in the countries they had devastated, this relationship was perpetuated. It continued to be necessary to the common safety, and was still accounted sacred. It then came to be a relation having respect to the holding of land. The Anglo-Saxon vassal—for such he was in fact before so named—pledged himself to love all whom his chief loved, to loathe all whom his chief loathed, and to be obedient in word and deed, provided that the chief on his part should fulfil the conditions claimed by his vassal on entering into such bonds.* It was the fidelity of the Saxons and

* These are the words: 'By the Lord, before whom this relic is holy, I will be to N. faithful and true, and love all that he loves, and shun

Northmen to these vows which made them so formidable even while they were heathens. When they began to take their place among settled and civilized nations, this fidelity remained conspicuous in their history.

Story of Cyneheard.

Mention may be made in this place of an instructive instance on this point. It is from the history of Cynewulf, king of Wessex. Cynewulf had been called to the throne by the thanes of Wessex in the place of Sigebyrcht. The dethroned king, and a younger brother named Cyneheard, became exiles. Sigebyrcht fell by the hands of a man whose lord he was said to have injured. Some thirty years after the death of Sigebyrcht, Cyneheard returns to Wessex with eighty-four sworn adherents, resolved to watch the movements of Cynewulf, and to attempt to possess himself of the throne. Unsuspicious of danger, Cynewulf one evening left Winchester, with a small number of followers, to visit a lady, an object of his affection, at Merton. Cyneheard and his friends stole from their hiding-places in the neighbouring woods, followed in the track of the royal party, and, as night came on, surrounded the house into which the king had entered. The king's attendants were dispersed in the neighbourhood. On hearing a noise outside, Cynewulf rose from his bed and hastened to the door. There his eye fell on Cyneheard, upon whom he instantly inflicted a wound. But the assailants were quick in protecting their leader, and the king soon lay in his blood upon the floor. The noise of this strife, and the shrieks of the female, brought the servants of the king to the spot. But the deed was done. Cyneheard proffered the king's attendants safety and wealth if they would embrace his cause. His overtures were rejected with

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all that he shuns, according to God's law and according to the world's principles, and never, by will nor by force, by word nor by work, do aught of what is loathful to him—on condition that he keep me as I am willing to deserve, and shall fulfil what our agreement was, when I submitted to him and chose his will.'—*Ancient Laws of England*, 76.

indignation. Every man who had been in the train of Cynewulf perished, in the desperate effort to avenge the death of his lord. The only survivor was a Briton, who owed his life to a wound which disabled him, and which was supposed to have been mortal.

News of what had happened soon fled to Winchester. Wiverth a thane, and Osric an ealdorman, summoned their retainers, and rode with all speed to the place. Cyneheard met them at the gate of the house, pleaded the wrongs of his family, reminded them that many of his followers under that roof were their own kinsmen, and promised them rich possessions if they would aid him in his object. Their answer is said to have been: 'If there be kinsmen of ours among you, 'let them depart, but our murdered lord was dearer to 'us than they; and it shall never be ours to submit 'to those who have shed his blood.' The kinsmen among the conspirators replied: 'We made the offer 'to the king's attendants that you make to us, and 'they chose to die rather than accept it. You shall 'not find that we are less faithful or less generous 'than they.' Wiverth and Osric began the assault. The resistance was obstinate—desperate. The fight ceased only as the last of the conspirators fell. Cyneheard was not dead, but was left to die of his wounds through the forbearance of Osric, who had been his sponsor in baptism.* Such was the spirit in which the Saxons and the Danes had been wedded to the fortunes of their chiefs.

Where the leader has his prescribed or understood duties, in common with those whom he leads, what is done must be done by joint counsel, and in gatherings which will partake of the nature of deliberative assemblies. The following picture of the proceedings of such an assembly in ancient Germany, may be taken as giving us the mode, substantially, in which matters

* *Chron. Sax.* ad an. 755. Fl. Wigorn. ad an. 784. Westmin. ad an. 786. Hunt. 196, 197. Malms. *de Reg.* lib. i. c. 2.

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were transacted by the Saxons in Holstein, and the Northmen in Scandinavia. 'In cases where all have 'a voice, the business is discussed and prepared by 'the chiefs. The general assembly, if no sudden alarm 'calls the people together, has its fixed and stated 'periods, either at the new or full moon. This is 'thought to be the season most propitious to public 'affairs. Their passion for liberty is attended with 'this ill consequence—when a public meeting is announced, they never assemble at the stated time. 'Regularity would look like obedience; to mark their 'independent spirit they do not convene at once, but 'two or three days are lost in delay. When they think 'themselves sufficiently numerous, the business begins. 'Each man takes his seat completely armed. Silence 'is proclaimed by the priests, who still retain their 'coercive authority. The king, or chief of the community, opens the debate; the rest are heard in their 'turn, according to age, nobility of descent, renown in 'war, or fame for eloquence. No man dictates to the 'assembly; he may persuade, but cannot command. 'When anything is advanced not agreeable to the 'people, they reject it with a general murmur. If the 'proposition pleases, they brandish their javelins. 'This is their highest and most honourable mark of 'applause: they assent in a military manner, and 'praise by the sound of their arms.'* We have now to see how the principles at the root of such usages were to come into action in the history of those branches of the German race which found their home in Britain.

Landholding the basis of Anglo-Saxon polity.

In plundering adventures abroad, Saxons or Danes might agree to share in a common danger, on the condition of participating in a common gain. But at home, some other basis of social connexion was neces-

* Tacitus, *Germania*, xi. Lappenberg says it does not appear that there was any king among the Germanic races who settled in Britain (ii. 307). Bede seems to say the same thing.—*Hist.* v. 10.

sary to social existence. This basis was found in the possession of land. Every people has its country or land, and its manner of disposing of that land in different holdings for its own advantage. Our earliest knowledge of the German tribes, presents them to us as settled upon arable land, surrounded with forest pastures, and as claiming a kind of property in both, according to laws written or understood, and laws guarded by some of the severest sanctions of religion. In fact, the principles of government introduced by the Germanic race in Britain, as elsewhere, rested on two foundations—on the possession of lands, and on distinctions of rank, as depending more or less on such possession. To be a free man, was to be a free-holder, —that is, a holder of land. In so far, the legislation of the Teutons, and that of the ancient Spartans and Romans, was the same. The history of the political institutions of the Anglo-Saxons, accordingly, is the history of the conditions on which lands were possessed; of the privileges which went along with such possessions; and of the different laws intended to secure to the different classes, determined by their different relations to the land, the safety and rights pertaining to them. These classes consisted of the noble, the freeman, and the serf.

Local names from families or confederations of settlers.

The names of places in Anglo-Saxon Britain, names borne by the same places to this day, can be shown to have been to a large extent patronymics—names of the family, clan, or tribe settling in them. What the names of the Campbells and Macgregors have been in the comparatively recent history of Scotland, these local names were among the bands of men who, in the fifth and sixth centuries, fought for a settlement in Britain and found it.* The settlers in such localities, we may suppose, were not, in all cases of the same

* Places, the names of which have so originated, are often marked as ending in *ing* or *ling*; also by the terminations *ham, hurst, ton, stede, wic, geat,* &c.—Kemble's *Anglo-Saxons*, i. 59. Lappen. ii. 319, 320.

blood. In an emigration so protracted, and the result of so many influences, this was not to have been expected. But the dominant man, or the dominant section, among the new-comers, gave name to the lands which were to be possessed; and that name, we have reason to believe, was generally a family or clan name. In the greater expeditions of the Saxons there would be contributions from many tribes. But these remained as separate bands, fought as such, and settled as such, in the new country. In Anglo-Saxon history they become, to some extent, what the Romans, the Luceres, and the Sabines had been in Roman history. It is to be remembered that these names were not in their first applications the names of cities. They were names given to the lands appropriated. The life of the Teutonic races had not been a city life. They were a pastoral and agricultural people. It was the work of time in our history to give existence to towns and cities, which should seem to monopolize the names that had first been given to the lands wholly irrespective of them.*

Local government.

Every district so formed was a little state. It enacted its own laws, regulated its own affairs, and armed for its own defence. It possessed full local means for dealing with its local questions. This came in part from the necessities of the case, and is known as a matter of history. But union on a larger scale was necessary. From the union of these districts

* But it must be borne in mind that all men were not holders of land. Hence side by side with these relations to land grew up relations between persons. Every man, whether free or not free, was bound to have his superior—his lord. Strangers whose lords were not known were men for whose good behaviour no man was known to be responsible, and for whose welfare no man was bound to care. The 'lordless' man, accordingly, in Anglo-Saxon law, was little better than an outlaw, and, in fact, was dealt with as an outlaw. Even men who travelled from place to place as 'chapmen,' were viewed for this reason with suspicion, and were made subject to special restraints by special laws.—*Ancient Laws and Institutions of England*, 11, 12, 14, 19, 37, 50, 51, 55, 70, 85, 90, 94. Kemble's *Anglo-Saxons*, bk. i. c. 2.

came the shires, or the counties, and from the union of counties came the kingdom. But while every district consisted of a body of persons possessing land, the shire, as such, had no land. The organization of the shire was simply political, not territorial. It existed for the better protection of territorial interests as belonging to the districts, and the districts might assign to it compensation for such services; but the shire authority was simply that vested in certain greater landholders by the less for their common benefit. General action could only be taken by means of such central authority. But the province of the central power left a large field to local independence.*

The free and the not free.

The men inhabiting the districts mentioned consisted mainly of two classes—the free and the not free. The distinction of the freeman was, that he possessed land within the limits of the community. By that fact he was entitled to privileges, and bound to special duties. It gave him the right to bear arms; and, if so disposed, to redress his own wrongs. But passing by the local court, and taking the law in his own hands, he was left to his private means in meeting such private hostilities as might be thus provoked. Next to the pride of bearing arms was that of wearing long flowing hair, which was restricted to the free of both sexes. The freeman could join the guilds or associations formed by his fellows for religious or political purposes; could change his place of abode at pleasure; and was entitled to take part in the passing, or in the abrogation of laws, and in the appointment of officers to places of civil or military trust. His presence was expected at the public council, and it belonged to him to take part in judging of cases between man and man. But with these privileges came the obligation to bear such burdens as the voice

* The man refusing to attend the gemote when summoned was liable to heavy costs, and even to death, should he be obstinate.—*Ancient Laws*, 89. Kemble's *Anglo-Saxons*, bk. i. c. 2.

of the community should impose, and to be prepared to engage in war, whether offensive or defensive, as required by that authority.*

The not free.

The not free, who dwelt among the free, had come into that condition from various causes. Some by birth, some by crime, and some by marriage. Some by losing their possessions, and being seized in person by their creditors. But conquest had reduced the greatest number to this level. It did not, indeed, follow that a vanquished people should always be an enslaved people. In some cases that result ensued—ensued rigorously; but in general a less severe course was taken. Circumstances, and the temper or policy of the victor, sufficed to break the force of the calamity.

The not free whose condition was in the least measure degrading, consisted of men who ceased to possess land, to bear arms, or to take any part in public affairs, but who were protected by some chief or lord, as the cultivators of certain lands, on condition of their rendering certain services, or paying a certain tribute. Tacitus describes this as the condition of the large mass of dependents who bore the name of serfs or slaves among the ancient Germans.† The distance was great between such a condition and that of the serf who became the mere chattel of a master, to be mutilated, sold, or put to death by him at pleasure.

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* It should be stated that the name *ceorl*, denoting the freeman in Anglo-Saxon law, comprehended persons, a majority of whom stood in the most varied relations to the persons under whom they had placed themselves as their lords.—Lapp. ii. 319. Two-fifths of the population at the Conquest are supposed to be of this class.

† *Germania*, xxv. The majority of those denominated freemen were under the protection of some lord, civil or ecclesiastical. The classes known by the names 'bordarii,' 'geburs,' 'cotsetlas,' and others, were chiefly employed on the land, and rendered various contributions and services as a rental. Many of the Britons were freemen, and their wergild was according to status and property. From the time of the Danish rule, the distinction between the Saxon and Welsh in England gradually disappears. It is found latest along the borders of the free Welsh provinces.

The condition of the Anglo-Saxon serf of the lowest grade was truly grievous. He could neither represent himself nor others. His interests were all in the keeping of another hand. He had no standing in any public court. His oath was of no value. His lord claimed possession of him, and of all that could belong to him, as he would have claimed possession of a horse, or of any other quadruped properly his own. As the serf had no property, he could pay no fine; and, should he prove a delinquent, the mulct must be exacted in torture upon his skin and his flesh. Generally, the serfs passed from hand to hand with the ground to which they were attached. Their children of course inherited their degradation.* The serf.

But while it is not to be doubted that the sufferings of persons of this class were often great, it is maintained by humane and well-informed authorities on this subject, that the homesteads, the clothing, and the food of the Anglo-Saxon serf would admit of comparison with the same means of comfort in the lot of our own peasantry.† It is clear also, that the differences of capacity and desert, even among those

* The number of slaves registered in the *Domesday Book* at the Conquest is 25,000. One of the laws of Ina forbids the master to sell his slave to be carried beyond sea, even though he should have committed a crime. (*Laws*, xi.) The wergild of the slave went half to the master, and half to the kindred of the slave. Slaves in the above record are found to be most numerous in Gloucestershire, where they are as one in four to every freeman; and in Cornwall, Devon, and Stafford, where they are as one in five. The numbers diminish as we remove from the Welsh border, until we come to counties, as Lincoln, Huntingdon, Rutland, and York, in which not a slave is registered. But in these counties the lower class of the not free, who at the same time were not slaves, increases. The condition of this class often bore too near a resemblance to that of the slave class elsewhere. The word læt, which occurs in a law of Ethelbert, is supposed to refer to a class of unfree Saxons whom the invaders brought with them.—*Leg.* xxvi. It was one of Alfred's laws that, if any man bought a Christian slave, the slave should be free after six years' service; and the punishment for stealing a freeman to sell him into slavery was death.—*Ancient Laws and Institutions of England*, 21, 22.

† Kemble's *Anglo-Saxons*, i. c. 8.

who were alike serfs, led to a great difference of treatment. Above all, manumission was possible. The generous might set the bondsman free, or might purchase his freedom. Such instances were not wholly unknown even among the pagan Germans.* They happily became very frequent among the Christian Saxons of Britain. Many edifying examples of this nature were supplied by the Anglo-Saxon clergy; and where they could not prevail to extinguish servitude, they did much to improve the laws, and to soften the customs, in relation to it.†

The noble by birth.

As the not free gave place in all things to the free, so the ordinary freeman gave place to the noble. The noble was a freeman, claimed his privilege, and acknowledged his obligations as such. But his estate was larger, and free from various burdens to which the lands of others were subject. He not only took his place in the *placitum* of his district or county, and of the Witanagemote, but he was of the class to whom it pertained to prepare and regulate the public business, and to give execution to the public will. The people might elect, but to the higher offices—the judge, the military chief, the king—the noble only could be elected. On the life of the noble a much higher price was set than on the life of the mere freeman. In him, the community with which he was more nearly connected found its natural centre and sovereignty, and through

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* Tacitus, *Germania*, xxv.

† *Ancient Laws and Institutions*, 40, 41, 48, 129, 162. Kemble's *Anglo-Saxons*, i. c. vii. The Christian clergy came into the place and power of the old pagan priesthood, very few of whom, as observed elsewhere, would seem to have followed their countrymen in their migration to this country. The wergild of an archbishop was that fixed on the life of a king's son. The bishop stood on the level of the ealdorman, the next in rank to royalty. He took part with the ealdorman also as an equal in the jurisdiction of the county court. The ealdorman had his gemote for the slave, as the king had his gemote for the nation, and by the ealdorman and the bishop the secular and ecclesiastical questions which came up in their respective jurisdictions were considered and decided.

him it could speak and act in regard to other communities.*

The noble by service.

But, besides the men who were noble from birth and possessions, and who stood in this political relation to their respective communities and neighbourhoods, there was a nobility which grew up by degrees of a different description—a nobility by service. This class consisted of the military retainers about the person of the king. The junior sons of noble or wealthy families were often pleased with the courtier and military life they were thus permitted to lead. The law of primogeniture assigned the paternal domain to the eldest son. Professional or commercial life was unknown. Military service was the only employment to which such men could look, and the only field in which such service was open to them was in being near the king. But in ceasing to be a landholder, the young noble ceased to be a freeman—that is, ceased to have any place in the communities of freemen in his own right. Only through his fealty to the king did he retain any political relation to the kingdom. But this relation to the king as coming thus into the place of every other, became on that account the stronger. These nobles by service had their home about the king's hearth; their place at the king's board. In all his perils they were at his side. In all his successes they were in their measure sharers in the spoil. Nothing could exceed the chivalrous devotion of such men to the cause of their lord. No dishonour could be greater than that of having failed him in his hour of need. Poetry de-

* The name 'ealdorman' expressed our idea of nobility. This was a dignity, it seems, which the king could not confer without the consent of his Witan. But the dignity, even so late as the time of Alfred, was not always hereditary, nor always even for life. It came to be a pretty general rule afterwards that the rank of the father should pass to the son.—Palgrave's *Commonwealth*, ii. 291. Ellis, *Introduction*, i. 168. Heywood's *Dissertation on Ranks*. Kemble's *Anglo-Saxons*, bk. ii. c. 4. Lapp. ii. 312–314.

scribes them as prepared to face, not only the natural, but the supernatural—the fiendish Grendal, and the deadly Firedrake—in defence of the leader to whom they were sworn.* When an assassin raised his arm against Edwin of Northumbria, the thane Lilla threw himself between the weapon and the king; and such was the stroke, that the point reached the body of the monarch through that of his self-sacrificed noble.† We have seen, also, the feeling evinced in this respect by the retainers of Cynewulf and Cyneheard in the fray at Merton.

In fact, this sense of honour came too much into the place of a passion for freedom. Nobles of this class learnt to content themselves with being excluded from the roll in the communities of freemen, so they could realize honour and wealth by placing themselves in this special relation to the king. It is obvious, that to the king such a force was always the nucleus of an army. Times might come in which the danger from this force to general liberty would be seen or suspected. But in such a state of society the feeling of safety imparted by this means would more than outweigh such fear in the mind of the peaceful. It is beyond doubt, however, that the rising power of this class of nobles tended more and more to lower the influence of the nobility who derived their authority from birth and territory, and to lessen the independence of the communities of freemen. The central became in many things too strong for the local. The civil was often made to give place to the military. So that even protection seemed to be purchased at too high a price. Of course the territorial nobles were at liberty to keep up a *comitatus*, or 'following,' as it was called, according to their means, after the manner of the king; and among the more wealthy such was more or less the custom. Thus lands were let on

* Beowulf, 1582 et seq. 5262 et seq.

† Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* ii. 9.

military tenure; and even ecclesiastics had their military retainers, as we see in the case of archbishop Odo.*

The family in Anglo-Saxon legislation.

In the Roman civilization, the feeling proper to family relationships, had been from the first almost superseded by maxims of state. Hence when the state became utterly corrupt, nothing remained but that society should fall to pieces. But with the Germanic race, the bonds of family and kindred were sacred, and were the basis of all other relations. The reverence for woman, the sanctity of the marriage vow, the rigour with which men of the same blood were bound to guard the interests of each other, and were made in their measure responsible for each other, were all parts of a system in which the family was regarded as the first form of society, and in which everything beyond was viewed as an expansion of what had been found there. The earlier Anglo-Saxon laws determine many things concerning the manner in which kindred should act as the protectors of kindred, and in which the one should be accounted responsible for the other. Subsequent laws, designed to limit such responsibility, and to remove cases from settlement by private violence

* From these comitas—military retainers—came the class of men known in Anglo-Saxon history, first as 'gesiths,' afterwards as thanes. When the retainer became a thane, it was required that he should be possessed of land. The wergild of the thane was equal to that of six mere freemen, and his privileges in other respects were in the same proportion. The ealdorman must possess forty hides of land, the thane five. In time, the simple possession of that amount of land made any man a thane. In Wessex, a Welshman so far opulent, acquired that status; and a merchant who made three voyages beyond sea in his own vessel might claim the same rank.—Heywood's *Dissert. on Ranks.* Ellis, *Introd.* i. 145–153. *Cod. Diplomat.* i. 249. Kemble's *Anglo-Saxons*, i. c. 7. The thane was under military service, and bound to appear on horseback. It is certain, also, that his rank entitled him to be present, if so disposed, at the Witanagemote. The term 'radchenistres' occurs in districts bordering on Wales, as the title of an inferior class of thanes who were probably Welsh. The term 'drenghs' also, is mentioned by Lappenberg as of Danish origin and as descriptive of a similar class in the north of England. —*Eng.* ii. 318.

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to the local courts, show clearly what the earlier usage had been.*

The Tithing and Hundred.

The Saxon institutions familiar to us under the name of Tithings and Hundreds were the natural result of this great feature in the complexion of Teutonic life. For the tithings and hundreds were not at first apportionments of territory—had that been the case they would have been equal. A tithing was the association of ten families, a hundred was the association of a hundred families.† The principle of the tithing was, that it bound each man of the ten to be in his measure responsible for the good conduct of the remaining nine. In this view the tithing became another form of the family. The rights and duties of its members were in common. Should one of their number become an offender, it devolved on the nine 'to hold him to right.' Should he flee, at least thirty days were allowed the tithing to find him. If he could not be found, then the head-man of the tithing must

* Edw. Conf. xx. et seq. Thorpe.

† In the later times of the Saxon dynasty, the hundred appears to have consisted of a hundred hides of land, but this was a change which resulted naturally from the increase of population. The smaller counties have, many of them, the greatest number of hundreds. But these smaller counties were the earliest and the most thickly peopled by the conquerors. In Kent, the new comers were many. In Lancashire, where the hundreds are the fewest, being six only in number, the natives still upon the land were numerous, and the strangers comparatively few.—Ellis, *Introd.* i. 184 et seq.

Care must be taken not to confound the tithings with the 'guilds.' The tithings were political associations, originating in the laws, and sustained by the sanctions of the state. But the guilds were rather voluntary associations, the objects of which were various. They go back in German history to the time when they were the sacrificial guilds of heathenism. Market days and court days were seasons of religious festival; and the guilds which met at such times and places were partly religious, partly convivial, and partly of the nature of benefit or insurance clubs. Provision was thus made against losses of property, expenses of funerals, and such matters. Such associations were the origin of important municipal institutions, especially along the coasts of the Low Countries. In England, the guilds were not known in their pagan associations.—Turner, bk. vii. c. 10. Lapp. ii. 349–351.

call in the head-men, and 'some of the best,' from the adjoining tithings, to the number of eleven, before whom, as jurors, the question to be decided would be, whether the tithing had done its best to bring the culprit to justice, and whether it had been itself in any way implicated in the offence. Should the tithing be acquitted, the head-man was required to produce the mulct, or fine proper to the offence, out of the property of the wrong-doer, or of his family, 'so 'long as that shall last;' and should that not be sufficient, the head-man and his tithing must furnish the remainder. In all cases the tithing is to see that recompence is made, or to make it.* So that the tithings of the kingdom were, in fact, its police; and, from the motives naturally supplied to vigilance, they furnished a police the most effective possible in such a state of society.

Many differences requiring adjustment were settled in the tithing. Such as were of a nature not to be so disposed of, passed to the court of the hundred, which met usually once a month. If not settled there, it went to the shire-court, which met three times a year.† Of course the men reckoned, both in the tithings and in the hundreds, were restricted to freemen. Men of various degrees not so reckoned, were connected in different ways with the court of some lord, who was at once their protector, and responsible for their conduct.‡

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* *Laws of Ethelred*, i. 1. *Laws of Edgar*, ii. 6. Canute, § xx. Edw. Conf. xv. xx. *Jud. Civit. Lond.* viii. 7. Kemble's *Anglo-Saxons*, i. c. 9.. 'The freeman's original position in the state was that of one of a family whose members were bound to mutual aid against violence.' —Lapp. ii. 336. But the Anglo-Saxon tithing extended their principle beyond cases of unlawful violence, to any matter which 'compromised the public weal, or trenched upon the rights or well-being of others.'— Kemble's *Anglo-Saxons*, i 251.

† In the court of the hundred the ealdorman was expected to preside, assisted by the bishop, and the principal thanes of the neighbourhood.— *Laws of Edgar*, ii. 5. Canute, xviii.

‡ Kemble's *Anglo-Saxons*, i. c. 9.

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Both the tithings and the hundred had something to do with the collecting and disbursement of rates, on many local matters, beside affairs of police; and their meetings which took place for these various purposes, were not always allowed to pass as meetings of mere business. One ancient document instructs the eleven men representing the tithings of a hundred in London to hold meetings as nearly as might be once a month, and directs that they should at such times 'have their refection together, and feed themselves 'as they think fit, and deal the remains of the meat 'for the love of God.'* Such seasons of good fellowship did much no doubt to sweeten the labours of trusty burghers in those days.

We have spoken of the right which Teutonic law and usage supposed to belong to the persons of a family which has suffered wrong, to exact a recompence from the persons of the family from which the wrong has proceeded. Tacitus says of the Germans: 'They are bound to take up both the enmities and 'the friendships of a father or relative.' He adds: 'Their enmities, however, are not implacable; for 'even homicide is atoned for by a settled number of 'flocks or herds. A portion of the fine goes to the 'king or state, a part to him whose damages are to be 'assessed, or to his relatives.'†

The wergild.

In Anglo-Saxon law the fine so imposed bears the name of 'wergyld.' The wergild was graduated according to the wrong done, and according to the rank of the person against whom it had been perpetrated. It applied to wrongs of all kinds, and it determined the value attached to every man's oath, according to his condition, in a court of justice. The settlement of the wergild by law was a material step towards putting an end to private feuds, and to the

* *Judicia Civitatis Lond.* Athelstan, v. 8, § 1. Kemble's *Anglo-Saxons*, i. 242.

† *Germania*, xii. xxii.

mischiefs inseparable from them. One of Alfred's laws denounces a heavy penalty against the man who should presume to seek redress by his own hands, in place of seeking it through the authorities bound to secure it for him. But in Anglo-Saxon history, custom in this respect was often found to be stronger than the law.*

The Witanagemote.

In the tithing we have seen the first step in political organization among the Saxons in England. Next came the organization of the hundreds. Next that of the shires. But beyond the meeting of the shire, was the meeting supposed to represent all the shires, and convened specially by the king. This assembly bore the name of the Witanagemote. It was the great council, or parliament, of the state. Two questions arise concerning it: How was it constituted? What was its business?

Its constitution.

It is clear that the constitution of the Witanagemote was not upon principles of representation defined and determined in the manner with which we are ourselves familiar. The tithings, the hundreds, the shires, might all elect their own officers to preside over their own local affairs; but we have no trace of evidence to show that it was the work of the Saxon freemen, or of any part of them, to choose the members of the Witanagemote. Athelstan, on the contrary, describes the assemblies of that nature convened at four different places, as consisting of persons 'whom the king himself had named.'† This was no doubt the case as regarded all the principal persons convened, and such we have reason to suppose was the usage. Parties not so invited were probably allowed, in some instances, to be present, to furnish information on particular questions, and even to take part in the proceedings; and, generally, there would seem to have been gatherings of freemen who were the witnesses of

* Kemble's *Anglo-Saxons*, bk. i. c. 10.

† *Codex Dipl.* i. 240.

the proceedings, and who, if pleased with them, were expected to testify their approval.

Still, the men constituting the Witanagemote were to some extent from all parts of the kingdom; and in so far, the kingdom may be said to have been represented by them. The meeting, moreover, included men of all ranks—the noble of every grade, and men who cannot be supposed to have risen above the rank of ordinary freemen.* On the whole, the Witanagemote would seem to have been as good an assembly for its purpose as could well have been brought together in such circumstances. In those days, the commoners were few who would have coveted a summons to traverse the half of England to be present at such a consultation. The rivers he would have to cross, the forests he would need to thread, the marshes to be compassed, the miserable roads, the worse accommodation—all would combine to render it necessary that the good man should see such advantages attendant on his presence in the great council as no such man ever did see, if his patriotism was to prove sufficiently elastic to carry him to the end of his journey. If historians and speculators would only imagine them-

* Here is the preamble to the laws enacted under Wihtræd, king of Kent, in 696. 'Wihtræd assembled a deliberative convention of the great men: there was Birtwald, archbishop of Britain, and the forenamed king, also the bishop of Rochester, the same was called Gybmund, was present; and *every degree of the church of that province spoke in unison with the obedient people.* Then the *great men* decreed, with *the suffrages of all,* these dooms, and added them to the lawful customs of the Kentish men, as it hereafter saith and declareth.'—*Ancient Laws and Institutions of England,* 16, 17. The following passage precedes the laws of Ina: 'Ina, by God's grace, king of the West Saxons, with the counsel and with the teaching of Cenred, my father, and of Hedde, my bishop, and of Eorcenwold my bishop, with *all my 'ealdormen,'* and *the most distinguished 'Witan' of my people,* and also with *a large assembly of God's servants,* have been considering of the health of our souls, and of the stability of our realm, so that just law and just kingly doom might be settled and established throughout our folk; so that none of the ealdormen, nor of our subjects, should hereafter pervert these our dooms.'—Ibid. 45.

selves *out* of the present and *in* the past a little more frequently and vividly, it would suffice to save them from much error. Mainly from the cause adverted to —the great difficulty of locomotion—the maximum of the leading men present in the Witanagemote was rarely more than a hundred, including bishops, with other ecclesiastical dignitaries, the different classes of nobles, and persons holding subordinate civil or military offices.*

Its business.

Concerning the business of this assembly, it is clear that its voice was to be taken in regard to all acts that should be authorized by the king; that it possessed the power to determine who should succeed to the throne on the demise of a king; that it could depose a sovereign whose rule was not for the benefit of his subjects; that it took part with the king in negotiations with an enemy, and in settling terms of peace; that conjointly with the crown it had power to appoint prelates to vacant sees, to change the tenure of lands, to levy taxes for the public service, and to raise forces by sea or land; that it acted as a supreme court of justice, in cases civil and criminal; and that it could adjudge the lands of offenders and intestates as forfeited to the king.†

Relation of the Witanagemote to the shires and the people.

It is material to observe, that it appears to have been a usage, that the results of the meeting of the Witan should be taken by the officers of the crown present into the different shires, and that the pledge of the shire court, including its nobles and its ordinary free-

* The names of the Witan attached to documents are not often more than thirty; the highest known number is one hundred and six. Dr. Lingard says (*Hist.* i. 186), 'they never amounted to sixty;' but this is a mistake.—See Kemble, bk. ii. c. 6. It does not follow, however, because the names in these instances were so few that no more persons were present. Such signatures are rarely given until the meeting itself has been dissolved, and then such as remain sign on the part of the whole. Among the names which appear we sometimes find those of the queen and of abbesses.

† The evidence on these points lies over a wide surface—the substance of it may be seen in Mr. Kemble's *Anglo-Saxons*, ii. 204–232, 241–261.

men, should be obtained in support of what had been done. In one parliament under Athelstan, sheriffs from all the counties of England are said to have been present, and in the usage mentioned we probably have the reason of their so being.* This was one method by which the difficulty was met of bringing members together from great distances for civil purposes in those times. 'The whole principle of Teutonic legis-'lation,' says Mr. Kemble, 'is, and always was, that 'the law is made by the constitution of the king, and 'with the consent of the people.'† And in the custom of obtaining a pledge from the freemen of the provinces in support of what the king and his great council had done, this principle was recognised in the manner found to be most available. Of course, what the Witanagemote had done was done. The shiremote had no power to annul or amend. But it had its occasions for conference, and for the expression of opinion; and the fact that the conclusions of the Witanagemote would be thus submitted to the shires in their respective courts, would not be without its effect on the proceedings of that body.‡

Different holdings of land.

When the Saxons possessed themselves of this country, they seized its territory as their own. The largest share fell to the king. The remainder was distributed among the chiefs who had followed his standard. These chiefs made further distributions into the hands of two classes of freemen—those who occupied the land as bocland, or bookland, which made it a kind of chartered freehold; and those who occupied it as folcland (the people's land), which was much the same with a lease and renthold. Those who occupied folcland, as being tenants rather than owners, were subject to a variety of burdens from which the occupiers of bocland were exempt. But the 'people's 'land' was not always in the hands of a humble

* *Leg. Athels.* v. 10.

† *Anglo-Saxons*, ii. 236.

‡ Ibid. ii. c. 6.

tenantry. Thanes and nobles were often its holders, on the prescribed conditions. *Domesday Book* shows that at the Conquest nearly half the kingdom of Kent was crown land, and that the remainder was in the hands of eleven persons, by whom, as tenants in chief, it passed, on various conditions, to the hands of a numerous secondary tenantry.*

Rise of towns.

In the midst of these holders and cultivators of the land, towns gradually made their appearance; and the artisan population of the towns has now to be dealt with, in the way of legislation and government, along with the agricultural population of the province. And it would be agreeable to know much more than we can now know in relation both to the origin and constitution of towns among the Anglo-Saxons.

We have seen in what condition the Britons were left by the Romans. The natives were incapable of making a wise use of the Roman cities. The Picts and Scots, and the Saxons after them, were not disposed to seek their homes in such places. The Scots were soon driven back to their fastnesses. The Saxons looked to the land and to their swords. In the meanwhile, neglect and the elements sufficed to reduce not a few of the most costly works of the Romans to ruins. In this climate, the falling rains of winter, and the progress of vegetation in summer, if left to themselves, soon do the work of the destroyer. Exposure to such influences for even less than a century, would suffice to reduce the ordinary buildings to heaps, and the strongest to roofless fragments. So that by the time the Saxons became settled and industrious enough to think of constructing walled cities, those which had once existed were so far gone to decay as to be of small service. In many instances the new town rose on the old site. Local advantages would often be to the new settler what they had been to the old. But in all the notices we have of early Anglo-Saxon buildings

* Lapp. ii. 323–326. Lingard, i. 461, 462.

the workmen seem not so much to be availing themselves of old edifices as raising new, and to be constructing them even of new material. Subsequently, no doubt, the Roman remains contributed to the education of the native workman. The Anglo-Saxon architecture in stone is everywhere a rude imitation of the Roman; but the earliest specimens in that architecture, as already mentioned, were of wood, with a covering of reeds. Hence the life led by king and bishop appears to have long been, for the most part, an ambulatory life. Places of sufficient importance to fix the residence of the one or the other can scarcely be said to have been in existence.

The Saxon burgh.

The *burgh*, or fortress, raised by the Saxon noble, bore small resemblance to the Norman castle, or the strong city of a later age. An elevated ground, defended by a dyke and a framework of wood, which as a piece of fortification was little in advance of an Indian stockade, sufficed for a while to constitute a place of safety. But within that enclosure there were stout hearts, and the strong arm. Around that fenced dwelling-place, the cultivators of the soil, and the few men who worked at handicraft, found lodgment. These were always ready to supply the wants of the fighting men often resorting thither, and to extend their infant traffic to the adjacent country. So beneath the home of the lord rose a village, and by degrees the village became a town. What the residence of a noble was in this respect at one point, the residence of a bishop, or of some abbot and his monks, would be at another—a nucleus to organizations destined to affect remote generations. The workers on the soil, or at the loom, clustered about the centre from which they might hope for protection; and it was the interest of the strong to protect the weak, for other reasons than that the weak were willing to pay them tribute for such service. History shows that in this manner many an Anglo-Saxon town had its beginnings. The 'burgh,' 'bury,' and 'borough,' found as terminations

in the names of so many of our towns, point to this phase of our early history. In such places the strong man once had his dwelling, and there the weak sought shelter and safety, and in process of time found something more. As a supply of the useful became more abundant, it created a taste for the luxurious; and in the history of the luxurious, the possession of the better never fails to excite a desire for the better still. Our great cities are all the creations, not of court pageants, so much as of a prosperous trade.

Government in towns.

As these natural gatherings became towns, enclosed within walls and gates, it may be said of them that they all became more or less self-governed communities. The degree in which they possessed this power would be determined by the power or policy of the lord, the bishop, or the abbot to whom they were subject. In general, they levied their own rates, had their own common purse, and chose, in whole or in part, their own officers. In all cases, the burghers were bound to each other by 'oath and pledge;' and formed confederations which, as we enter further into the Middle Age, become a power strong enough to check both nobles and kings in their march of oppression. In some instances a city became so free as to be independent of any local authority beyond itself—being, according to our language, a county in itself. The rights of such a corporation were, in fact, kingly rights. 'Such 'a free organization was capable of placing a city upon 'terms of equality with other constituted powers; and 'hence we can easily understand the position so fre- 'quently assumed by the inhabitants of London. As 'late as the tenth century, and under Athelstan, a 'prince who had carried the influence of the crown to 'an extent unexampled in any of his predecessors, we 'find the burghers treated as power to power with the 'king, under their port-reeves and bishops; engaging, 'indeed, to follow his advice, if he have any to give 'which shall be to their advantage; but, nevertheless, 'constituting their own guildships or commune, by

'their own authority, and a basis of mutual alliance 'and guarantee, as to themselves seemed good.'* If London could take such ground, and if in dealing with weaker princes it could proceed even further, the lesser cities would not be wholly unmindful of her example. But we read of no such strifes between the burghers and their lords in Anglo-Saxon Britain as are found in the history of the Continental cities, and in our own after the Conquest. The presumption is, that though many lords were no doubt prone enough to play the tyrant, on the whole, the liberty ceded to the Anglo-Saxon burghers was considerable. Suffering in the towns, we have reason to think, resulted mainly from the great numbers of the not free and not protected who crowded into them.†

Position of the king.

Such, in general, became the condition of the subjects of the crown in Anglo-Saxon Britain. The royalties, or personal rights of the sovereign, were various. His life and person were protected by the heaviest penalties known to the law. He had the use of large territories, corresponding to our Woods and Forests, which passed with the crown to his successor. The holder of this property was the king; its guardianship was with the Witanagemote. Besides his revenue from this source, the monarch received, after the German custom, voluntary contributions, in kind or otherwise, from the freemen; contributions which, from being voluntary, became a custom, and becoming a custom, were too often interpreted as taking with them the force of law, and as implying the right of exaction. Of the fines and confiscations for offences a part went to the king. It belonged to

* Kemble, *Anglo-Saxons*, i. 310, 311.

† The *Domesday Book* makes frequent mention of what had been the old usage of the Anglo-Saxon towns and cities, and leaves those customs undisturbed.—*Introduction*, by Sir Henry Ellis, lxi.–lxvii. All the boroughs had to make their contributions to the king in men, horses, arms, and money payments. But the nature of the contributions varied somewhat with locality.

him to maintain a military force, which, though necessarily limited by his means, partook of the nature of a standing army. It was with the king to convene the Witanagemote. But he had not the power to dispense with its meetings, nor was it to be dissolved at his pleasure. In this fact we trace the presence of a great principle of liberty, favourable alike to the freedom of the subject and to the safety of the throne. The king, as the conservator of the public peace, could summon the militia to suppress disorder, or to meet an invader. The coinage was in his charge. He was, moreover, the fountain of justice, inasmuch as to his court appeals might be made from all other courts; and the fountain of honour also, inasmuch as he could raise his servants, civil or military, to new positions of rank and title.*

The king's household.

These prerogatives, and some others, formed a large field for the exercise of the kingly power. The exact limits within which such royalties would be kept, depended much on the character and circumstances of the sovereign. Nor did the royal influence terminate in such privileges. As the monarchy became consolidated, the court and the household were constituted of men who, while themselves often of high rank, had learned to value such relations to the king as opening to them new sources of wealth and power. The chamberlain, who had the care of the household; the marshal, who possessed the command of the cavalry; the steward, who took charge of the royal table; the butler, who acted as the king's cupbearer; the clergy, who were there to discharge their spiritual functions—

* Kemble, ii. c. 2. The German estimate of the female character is evinced in the place assigned to the Anglo-Saxon queen. She was consecrated and crowned with her husband, or separately if the king married after he had become king. Other provisions of Saxon law in relation to the queen were in accordance with this usage. The exception to this custom in Wessex, in consequence of the crimes of Eadburga, was merely exceptional, and after a time, even there, the ancient usage was restored.—Lapp. ii. 310. Ellis, *Introd.* i. 171. Heywood *on Ranks.*

all these, while deriving much from their connexion with the king, in their turn, reflected lustre on his court, and added weight to his influence and authority.*

Administration of justice—trial by jurors and compurgators.

In the administration of justice among the Anglo-Saxons we find principles which may be traced in our later usages, and others which have been superseded by our more advanced civilization. The finding of a verdict in the Hundred Court, and in all other Courts, was the province of twelve thanes or free-tenants, or it might be that the judgment would be with twice or thrice that number, according to the nature of the case. The voice of two-thirds gave a sufficient verdict. When the evidence was not such as to warrant a judgment, the decision taken was on the ground of compurgation—that is, according to the oaths of persons expressing their belief in the veracity of the declarations made by the accuser or the accused. In this decision by oath, every compurgator's oath was of weight according to his social position as determined by his wergild. In some cases the number of compurgators required to ensure an acquittal was fixed by law, often the numbers proffering their attestations greatly exceeding that limit. It sometimes happened that, after both investigation and compurgation, the court would be perplexed. In such instances it was not unusual, in civil cases, for twelve or more thanes, chosen equally by the litigants, to retire from the court that they might deliberate upon their verdict. In criminal cases, the course of proceeding was in nearly all respects the same, except that trial by ordeal was then open to the accused, in place of trial by compurgation, should he be disposed to take that alternative. Our trial by jury grew out of such usages, but in several respects it is something different and better.†

* Palgrave's *English Commonwealth*, ii. 345. Philipps, *Angelsachs*, § 23. Lapp. ii. 311, 312.

† *Hist. Ram.* 415, 416. *Regist. Roff.* 32. *Hist. Eliens.* 479. *Laws of Ethelred*, iii. 3. *Leg. Sax.* 262. Palgrave's *Commonwealth*, i. 100, 216. Lappenberg, ii. 344–346.

Trial by ordeal.

In trial by ordeal the culprit was enjoined to give himself to fasting and prayer for three days. On the last day he received the sacrament, and was admonished not to proceed unless conscious of his innocence. The place of trial was a church. The only persons present were the accuser, the accused, and twelve friends on either side as witnesses of the proceeding. The parties stood in lines opposite each other, as the litany was read. If the trial was by water, a vessel was placed on a fire in the midst, and it was seen that the water boiled. The accused then thrust his hand into the vessel; the priest immediately wound a cloth over the scald, and placed a seal upon it, which was to remain unbroken for three days. If the trial was by fire, the alleged culprit seized a bar of hot iron, and bore it to the distance of three steps. The cloth was then placed about the hand in the same manner. At the expiration of three days the seal was broken, and if the hand was found to be healed, the party was acquitted; if not, he was condemned. As there were many cases in which the healing was declared to have taken place, it is difficult to suppose that the clergy were wholly guiltless in the part they took in these proceedings. The probability is, that the guilty who committed themselves to such an experiment, did so from some collusion with the priest; and that the innocent were influenced by an excessive credulity as to the power of the priesthood. The experiment, however, was very rarely attempted; and its design, whether in its pagan or in its Christian connexion, was to bring the guilty to confession by means adapted to affect the imagination and the conscience.*

* *Leg. Sax.* 26, 27, et seq. Trial by single combat was not unknown among the ancient Germans. Grimm (*D. R. A.* 927 et seq.) is cited by Lappenberg (ii. 347) as giving examples. Edmund Ironside's challenge to Canute is a fact which seems to recognise such a custom in our history. Our trial by jury is, as commonly supposed, of Anglo-Saxon origin. But the number twelve was often fixed on by our ancestors in their judicial process. The function of jurors, moreover, in those days,

Summary of the Revolution in Government.

Such was the change in respect to government which resulted from the conquests of the Saxons and Danes in Britain. The rover finds a settled dwelling-place. The man who had lived by plunder puts his hand to honest industry. The culture of the soil is followed by the construction of the village and the town. The men who find their home in the new country, become concerned for the safety of their newly acquired substance, and of their persons. The

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differed materially from that now assigned to them. 'Trial by jury, according to the old English law, was a proceeding essentially different from the modern tribunal still bearing the ancient name, by which it has been replaced; and whatever merits belong to the original mode of judicial investigation—and they were great and unquestionable, though accompanied by many imperfections—such benefits are not to be exactly identified with the advantages now resulting from the great bulwark of English liberty. Jurymen of the present day are the triers of the issue; they are individuals who found their opinion upon evidence, whether oral or written, adduced before them; and the verdict delivered by them is their declaration of the judgment they have formed. But the ancient jurymen were not empannelled to examine into the credibility of the evidence—the question was not discussed and argued before them: they, the jurymen, were the witnesses themselves; and the verdict was substantially the examination of these witnesses, who, of their own knowledge, and without the aid of other testimony, afforded their evidence respecting the facts in question, to the best of their belief. In its primitive form, therefore, a trial by jury was only a trial by witnesses; and jurymen were distinguished from other witnesses only by the customs which imposed upon them the obligation of an oath, and regulated their number, and which prescribed their rank and defined the territorial qualifications from which they obtained their degree and influence in society.'—Palgrave's *English Commonwealth*, i. 243, 244.

Perhaps the difference between the trial by compurgators and our trial by jury is a little over-stated in the above passage. The oath of the compurgators was valued as being that of men from the neighbourhood who were likely to know the character of the accused, and to know the circumstances of the case, not merely by common rumour, but by means more definite and certain. When they were agreed in saying not guilty, the sentence of the magistrate would scarcely be at issue with that decision. Their words were virtually, though not formally, an acquittal. It was, however, a material advance when the evidence came to be adduced in court, and the decision of guilty or not guilty was made to rest with the jury, and not with the judge.

'oath and pledge' which had bound them as free-booters, now binds them as men engaged in better occupations, and disposed to exchange government by the sword for government by law. Tithings, and hundreds, and shire-courts, weave them all into a great social network, which covers the land. Every man enters into a security for the good conduct of the men nearest about him, and acts continually, from the nature of the case, as an officer of police—and as an officer whose motives to vigilance supersede the necessity of pay. Such as were not responsible to the court of the hundred, were responsible to the hall-court of their lord. All localities have their local governments, and each locality has its refuge against injustice from within itself, in its right of appeal to the sense of justice beyond and above itself. For the tithings, the hundreds, the hall-mote, the shires, the king's-court, the king himself—none of these are absolute. The last resort lies with the wisdom of the great council of the nation, conjoined with the king. By the weak and necessitous such ultimate appeals would rarely be made. But the right was open to such cases and persons as might reasonably claim a hearing in that high quarter. Such is the polity which, in new circumstances, grew out of those simple principles of government which had been common to the Germanic race from the earliest time, and which were to be further developed through the storm and labour of centuries in English history. The not free among the Anglo-Saxons, were, as we have seen, either slaves, or persons under the protection of particular lords. Among these, some were rich, many were needy; and the benevolence of our ancestors assigned a fourth of the revenue of the clergy, from all sources, to the special benefit of the poor.*

In judging of the revolution involved in the settled

* Kemble's *Anglo-Saxons*, bk. ii. c. 11.

government of the Anglo-Saxons, the reader has to view that government in two relations—in its relation to the disorders which it superseded in the case of the Romanized Britons; and in its relation to the rude organizations of the Saxon hordes who migrated to our shores in the fifth and sixth centuries.

CHAPTER IX.

REVOLUTION IN SOCIAL LIFE IN ANGLO-SAXON BRITAIN.

Industrial life in Anglo-Saxon Britain—Agriculture.

WAR is the great feature in Anglo-Saxon history. But even in these circumstances the industrious habits of the people are conspicuous. The names of our old implements of husbandry are nearly all of Saxon origin. Some knowledge of this science the settlers may have acquired from the Romanized Britons. But they had not been wholly strangers to such occupations in the countries from whence they came. To till the ground, indeed, had never been the work of their free men. It had been left to women and slaves. Nor did the agriculture of this island ever become, in the hands of the Saxons, what it had been under the Romans. But its progress, though unequal, was continuous and considerable, down to the Conquest.

Much time was given by the Anglo-Saxons to the rearing of cattle and swine. The large pasture, and the extensive forest lands, at their disposal, were favourable to such pursuits. Even the villeins, or peasants, were encouraged to become herdsmen on a small scale. The goat gave them milk and fleece. The skins of their herds gave them leather for shoes, breeches, and gloves—the latter being generally worn, even by the humblest. Wool was an article of exportation, and was returned by the artisans of the Netherlands and of the Rhine provinces in the form of woollen cloths. Honey was much valued; and the bee-master was a person almost as well known as the swineherd. Great care was bestowed on the breeding of horses; and laws were enacted to ensure attention to that object.

Hence the readiness with which the Danish invaders mustered their cavalry. We do not find that corn was ever imported into Saxon Britain, nor does the country appear to have suffered so much as most countries in those times from dearth, though mention is made of seasons in which the suffering from this cause was great. The grain raised consisted of wheat, barley, rye, and oats: the latter were grown in great quantities, and appear to have been used as food by the people, much as in Scotland. The rent of land was generally paid in produce, it was rarely a money payment.*

Draining and embankments.

Among the good works of the Anglo-Saxon husbandmen, we must reckon their experiments in draining and embankments. Large tracts of marsh land were thus reclaimed, especially in the eastern counties. Garden culture was common, and not less so the culture of the vine. Beer, ale, and wine from the grape, were the common beverage. The citizens of London, who strolled on summer holidays from Barbican across Smithfield; or from Ludgate over Holborn Hill, did so amidst meadows, gardens, and vineyards. Every monastery had its vineyard. Gloucestershire was especially famous for its grapes. The wine so produced had its place on the king's table. In the better sort, the acidity, we may suppose, was subdued by artificial means.†

Mines.

The Romans amassed large wealth from the mines of Britain. But the Britons did not prosecute the labours so commenced, and soon lost the knowledge so acquired. Even the tin mines of Cornwall seem to have been neglected for many centuries after the departure of the Romans. But the Saxons obtained lead in Derbyshire, and iron in abundance from many quarters, particularly from Somersetshire, Monmouth-

* Guil. Pictav. 210: *Laws of Ina*, xliv. et seq. and of *Athelstan*. *Liber Niger Scaccarii*, lib. i. c. 7. *Hist. Eliens.* i. 52. Lappenburg, ii. 356 et seq.

† Malms. *de Pont.* lib. iv. *Hist. Eliens.* apud Gale. ii. 2. Ellis, *Introd.* i. 116, 203. Rymer, i. 17.

shire, and Herefordshire. William of Poitiers speaks of the universal wealth of Britain as greatly exceeding that of France, and, strange to say, describes the island as another Arabia from the abundance of its gold. Salt was a great article of traffic among the Anglo-Saxons. The chief salt works were in Sussex and Cheshire. In the former county they numbered nearly four hundred such works at the time of the Conquest. Wales was supplied for the most part from the pits in Cheshire.*

Handicraft and foreign trade.

The men who lived by trade or handicraft were few, compared with those who were otherwise employed. Houses, furniture, utensils, clothing, personal ornaments, all these suppose considerable industry and skill in the 'mysteries' which give existence to such productions. Most of these, we may be assured, were by native artists, though foreign workmen were introduced by ecclesiastics and kings, from time to time, who became the educators of native talent. Cathedrals and royal residences came by degrees to be built of stone; but the houses of the Anglo-Saxons, even of their great men, continued to be constructed, for the most part, of wood and other perishable material.† Stamford is mentioned as the place where a company of cloth-weavers followed their vocation.‡ In the working of embroidery, presenting a rich display of colours and gold, the Anglo-Saxons, and especially the females, so far excelled, that productions of this nature became known in most of the capitals of Europe under the name of 'English Work.'§ So early as the eighth century we find an English merchant named Bolto resident at Marseilles, the said merchant being the father of a bishop.‖ Such men, we have reason

* Guil. Pictav. 107. *Domesday*, i. 268. Ellis, i. 132. Lappenberg, ii. 363–364.

† Bede, *Hist. Abb.* 195. Eddius, *Vita Wilf.* c. 16, 17, 22. Asser, *Vita Alf.* 20. Malms. *de Reg.* lib. 2, 3. Ingulph.

‡ *Domesday*, i. 336. § Muratori, *Antiq.* v. 12. Guil. Pictav. 211.

‖ Lappenberg, ii. 364.

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to believe, were known in all the great marts of the Continent. One of the laws of Edward the Elder raised the merchant who had made three voyages in his own ship to the rank of a thane.* Charlemagne, as we have seen, sent to Offa, king of Mercia, the complaint of certain French merchants concerning the woollen articles exported from England as being unfairly diminished in size.† London was known as the great meeting-place of foreign traders. French, Normans, Flemings, 'men of the Emperor,' that is, men from the rising Hansè towns of Germany—all might be seen in their foreign costume, and heard in their foreign tongue, as they exposed their commodities for sale on the land at Billingsgate, or in their vessels upon the Thames. As it was in this respect in London, so was it in a measure in all the chief seaports. Bristol, even then, was a place of much traffic.‡ Its merchants were in constant intercourse with Ireland, where they carried on a trade in slaves.§ But these different kinds of traffic were conducted for the most part in the way of barter. Some of the bolder Anglo-Saxon seamen engaged in the whale fishery, and extended their voyages to Iceland.‖

So did the industrial and commercial genius of the Saxon race in Britain begin to develop itself. The sea-king thus gave himself to the service which was to transform him into the merchant-king. In this new form of the spirit of adventure we see the germ of the power which has since given a people to half the continent of America, and has set up its sovereignty over the fairest portion of Africa and India. The impulse is still the impulse of race—resolute, en-

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* *Ancient Laws and Institutions of England*, 81.

† *Epist. Caroli ad Offam*, Wilkins, i. 159. ‡ Lappenberg, ii. 315.

§ *Anglia Sacra*, ii. *Vita S. Wulstani.*

‖ Lappenberg, ii. 364. There are many laws which show that the internal trade of Saxon Britain was considerable, and subject to many cautious regulations.—Ibid. ii. 355, 356.

during, indomitable. When the home of the Saxon was changed, his vocation and tastes changed; but this change has been simply the finding of a new outlet for the old tendency towards action and adventure, and the old passion for dominion.

The intellectual life of the Anglo-Saxons, in our sense of that expression, begins with their conversion to Christianity. The bard, combining skill in poetry and music, has his place in nearly all rude nations. We have some knowledge of the lyric poetry of the pagan Northmen; but we know nothing of this embryo literature as it may have existed among the pagan Saxons. Many attempts have been made to interpret the old Runic characters of the Scandinavians; but the results of such labour are of small value.*

The intellectual life of the Anglo-Saxons.

We scarcely need say, that with the Anglo-Saxons the capacity to read and write continued to the last to be almost exclusively the accomplishment of the clergy. Even kings were not expected to attach their names to documents, but to 'sign' with a cross. But it was the manner of our ancestors to learn their poetry, and especially their ballad and glee poetry, by heart; and in this way they often possessed themselves of the contents of books while destitute of books. Of music they were passionately fond; and it was their custom in their social gatherings to sing in parts, combining the harmony of verse with the harmony of sound. The word 'glee' is of Saxon origin, and has descended to us from times when our countrymen who could not read verse, found delight in singing it. Alfred records in his *Hand-boc* that Aldhelm, bishop of Sherborne, to secure the attention of his rude neighbours, was wont to stand on a bridge and sing his religious instruction to them in the form of ballads.†

Music and poetry.

* Palgrave's *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, c. vii.

† Ibid. Turner's *Anglo-Saxons*, bk. ix. c. 1. We may judge of the pleasure which the Anglo-Saxons felt in glee singing from the fact that many canons of the church forbid the clergy being parties to such amusements.—*Ancient Laws and Institutions*, 400, 401, 418.

But the poetry of the Anglo-Saxons, even in their Christian state, never rose to a level to be interesting to modern readers, except as belonging to the curious in the *history* of literature. The best known among this class of compositions, is the narrative poem by Cedmon, and the poems on Beowulf and Judith. The compositions of these authors have something of an epic purpose in them. Aldhelm, Alcuin, and other men of their order, also wrote poetry; but they wrote in Latin, not in the vernacular tongue. Cedmon is much praised by Bede. His narrative embraces the fall of the angels, the creation, the entrance of sin, and the victory achieved over Satan. It treats of Paradise as lost and as regained. The conception is so far Miltonic, but we cannot speak of the execution as being of that order. The author of Beowulf is not known. The work is attributed to the tenth century. It is a historical romance, with a good deal of the old saga or heathen element in it. Rothgar, a king, finds many of his faithful thanes cut off by the secret agency of Grendal, one of the bad deities of the Saxon mythology. Beowulf, a young warrior from a distant land, undertakes to destroy Grendal, and, through some difficulty and danger, at length succeeds. In the development of this story descriptions are given of persons, scenes, conversations, and encounters, which illustrate the thinking and manners of the times. The poem of Judith is founded on the story of Judith and Holofernes, but exhibits—characters and manners—a strange medley of Eastern and Western, ancient and modern.

The poetical element in these compositions is very limited. It is almost confined to a few Ossian-like turns of thought or expression, which occur at intervals. The substance consists of what we should account indifferent prose, subject to the restraints of a particular rhythm, the laws of which it is often difficult to discover. The Latin poetry of the Anglo-Saxons is deserving notice mainly, not as poetry, but as illus-

trating the taste and scholarship realized in those days. If the poet too often lacked fire in his native tongue, he was not likely to feel it in attempting to speak through all the artificial impediments of an acquired language.*

Ballads.

The nearest approach to genuine poetry in the history of Anglo-Saxon literature appears to have been realized in the popular lyric ballads. These compositions, as designed for the people, and not for the scholar, were natural in their style and substance, bearing only a very partial resemblance to the more ambitious productions just mentioned. They came into prevalence in the later period of Anglo-Saxon history. They treated of love, war, and the manners of the times, and of these with the admixture of pathos, energy, and satire common to the minstrel in his use of such themes. Many of the anecdotes given with so much finish in Hume's *History*, from Malmsbury and others, were transmitted in this form to the times of the Normans. The licentious habits of king Edgar, the great favourite of Dunstan and his churchmen, did not escape the lash of this troubadour literature. Some judgment may be formed of the skill which at times characterized these performances, from the account given of Alfred as finding his way to the tent of Guthorm the Dane under the privileged guise of a minstrel. In that guise, too, Anlaf, the great Northman leader, is said to have gained access to the tent of Athelstan, when that king led his formidable army into Northumbria. It thus appears that the most distinguished and accomplished men were known to be students in this art; and that the harper had his place and reputation with all ranks, with people and princes.†

Prose literature.

The prose literature of the Anglo-Saxons, coming

* Turner's *Anglo-Saxons*, bk. ix. c. i.–v.

† Malmsbury *de Reg.* lib. ii. c. 4, 6. Bede, *Hist.* lib. iv. c. 24. Ingulf, 67, 68. *Hist. Eliens.* 505.

as it did wholly from the clergy, was naturally in a great degree ecclesiastical and theological. The only teaching accessible to them was such teaching as characterized the darkest interval of the Middle Age. The writings of Bede and Alcuin give us the most favourable view of prose composition as found among the Anglo-Saxon clergy; and to mention the most favourable example among laymen is, of course, to name the great Alfred. We learn from the writings of Alcuin, that he grew up from childhood in the city of York, and that he was educated in the school or college sustained there by the pious archbishop Egbert. The archbishop, and Aelbert his kinsman, conducted the teaching of the establishment. The course of instruction embraced grammar, rhetoric, jurisprudence, poetry, astronomy, physic, and theology—the last consisting of expositions of the Old and New Testaments. Grateful was the feeling of Alcuin as he looked back in after life to the services of Aelbert in York, and remembered how the good man endeavoured to inspire his pupils with a true love of learning, as he read to them from the pages of many Latin authors—such as Cicero, Virgil, Pliny, Statius, Lucan, and Boethius. Alcuin was resident eight years in the court of Charlemagne, and subsequently found the quiet he coveted as abbot of Tours. His reputation and influence were great, both in the French court and in France generally. Bede's influence was more felt in his own country. Both were men of piety, and of great industry; but Alcuin was more free from superstitious credulity, more a man of the world, and a man of general capacity and culture, than the devout Saxon to whom the affection of our ancestors gave the name of the 'Venerable.' The prose writings of both these authors are admirable for their unpretending simplicity.* On these models the style of Alfred was formed. Malms-

* See the *Life of Alcuin*, by Dr. Frederick Lorenz.

bury is loud in his praise of bishop Aldhelm as a prose writer, but the praise is ill-bestowed. He is everywhere exaggerated and unnatural.*

Mental culture checked by the Danes.

The most favourable period in the history of Anglo-Saxon literature is that associated with the names of Bede and Alcuin. Their disciples were many. But soon after their day began the invasions of the Northmen; and such were the ravages then perpetrated, that the labours of Alfred in this direction were not so much labours to originate learned studies as to restore them. The great Anglo-Saxon king was occupied during the earlier part of his reign in the struggle to save his country from the hands of the men who had invaded it. When that object had been as far as possible achieved, he began to look to the social improvement and the intellectual culture of his people. In regard to literature he had himself much to learn. Until this time he had been ignorant of the Latin tongue. Amidst the cares of a royalty especially beset with care, he acquired a knowledge of that language. The use he made of this new power, was to translate from that language such works as he thought most likely to promote the religious and general improvement of his subjects. What are called Alfred's *Works*, consist, for the most part, of these translations. But they are very free translations. He often gives the substance, in the place of the literal rendering. He often omits and inserts at pleasure. These publications, accordingly, become expressive of the mind and heart of the patriot king. Among the works thus selected, were the *Chronicle of the World*, a sort of general history by Orosius; the *Consolations of Philosophy*, by that last of the Romans, Boethius; portions of the writings of Pope Gregory, and, apparently, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. Copies of these writings were multiplied and distributed, especially in the places

* Turner's *Anglo-Saxons*, bk. ix. c. 6. Palgrave, c. 7, 8, 9.

where the clergy were engaged in the work of education.* The effect of such an example must have been very great. But all these hopeful proceedings were not a little counteracted by the subsequent inroads of the Danes. To the warlike god Odin, no sacrifice was thought to be more acceptable, than that of men who had deserted his worship, and become a set of shaven psalm-singers. Everything, in such places, was destroyed. More than the half of England passed into the hands of these strangers. Their power, as we have seen, became great along the whole coast north of the Thames, and stretched far inland, so as to cover a large portion of the great kingdom of Mercia, and of the ancient kingdom of Deira.

Subsequently to the time of Alfred, there was room to hope that the Danes and Saxons might gradually amalgamate, and conjointly prove strong enough to repel all further invasion. But if such hope was entertained, it proved to be illusive. Invasion only became more formidable as the island was known to have become more capable of resistance. The English Danes too often fraternized with the invaders, and disorder increased, until a Danish dynasty came, for a while, into the place of the Saxon. England thus fell into the hands of great landowners who were of two races. The house was thus divided against itself. The restoration of the Saxon line in Edward the Confessor seemed to promise that oil would be poured on these troubled waters. But that tendency of affairs was not to last.

Of course, the converted Danes, after a time, shared considerably in the spirit of improvement. Odo, one of their number, became archbishop of Canterbury. The mind of Canute came under Christian influences with much advantage to himself and his subjects. The counties occupied by the Danes included a larger proportion of freemen at the time of

* Dr. Pauli's *Life of Alfred*, chap. vi.

the Conquest than the more purely Saxon districts. But in a kingdom whose entire population was restricted to between two and three millions, and with so large a proportion of the population in a condition more or less servile, the number acquiring any knowledge of letters must have been small.* This privileged class received instruction in the schools connected with the different cathedrals and monasteries, or under the private tuition of ecclesiastics who were competent to such service, and disposed so to employ themselves.

Science.

In this manner the Anglo-Saxons acquired the little they knew of science. Here, as everywhere, their object was not so much to discover as to learn—to rescue and secure the fragments of a past knowledge which seemed to be fast floating by them to oblivion. Arithmetic they studied after the manner of the ancients, without the aid of the Arabic numerals, and adhering to the metaphysical distinction of numbers. So studied, even arithmetic was a difficult science. Bede attempted something in natural philosophy. His work here was to copy the truth and error of those who had gone before him. His great merit consists in the good sense which disposes him to attribute natural phenomena so generally to natural causes. But the geography of our wonder-loving fathers teemed, not only with mistakes, but with inventions of a very free description. The countries between Canterbury and Rome, and between Rome and Jerusalem, came to be pretty familiar to them. Strange sights, however, according to report, were to be seen in some of those distant regions. Those who would travel far enough would find themselves in lands in which there were

* Palgrave's *Commonwealth*, c. 1. Mr. Hallam describes the ceorl as the precursor of our English yeoman, and regards the serfs, or slaves proper, as consisting mostly of Britons, and of such Saxons as became slaves through becoming criminals.—*Middle Ages*, ii. 386, 387. Saxons were sometimes thus reduced by other causes; but, taken together, the serfs at the Conquest do not appear to have formed more than about one in eighty of the population.

white people fifteen feet high, some with two faces, some with neither face nor head, their eyes and mouth being placed in their chest; and some eight feet high, with a diameter equal to their altitude. Learned men did not, of course, pay much heed to these marvellous relations. Alcuin expresses himself very sensibly concerning physics, ethics, and logic, the favourite studies of his time. What the Romans knew on these subjects the more intelligent Anglo-Saxons knew and taught. This observation applies to the astronomy, the chemistry, the medicine, the surgery, and the metaphysics of our ancestors. In all these the Roman authors were their preceptors, and they followed their masters at various distances. In religion only was it given them to be innovators. They had substituted a new religion in the place of the old; but even this had come to them from the old source.*

In literature, and in mental culture of every description, the Saxons had to begin with the lowest elements. Even their teachers were the ill-instructed of a dark age—while their own struggle for independence, and even for existence, was often such as to leave them little leisure or inclination for such pursuits. Bearing these facts in mind, it should not be deemed surprising if the signs of intellectual life among them are found to be more valuable for what they seem to promise, than from what they include. Enough was achieved in most unfavourable circumstances, to warrant the hope of something much better should better circumstances arise. The distance is no doubt great between a Bede and a Gibbon, a Cedmon and a Milton, but these men have all spoken the same mother-tongue, and belong to the development of the same national intellect.

* Turner's *Anglo-Saxons*, bk. ix. c. 7, 8.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

WE have seen that the settlement of the Saxons and Danes in Britain was a settlement by the sword. It led to a subjugation, and a large displacement, of the old British population. In the case of the invaders, this change brought with it a change from a state in which the soil was not private property, but the property of the community, ever passing into new hands, to a state in which the private person comes to possess his freehold, and, as a consequence, learns to add to the rearing of cattle, the tillage of the ground, the construction of a new order of buildings, and the signs of a general progress in industry, learning, science, and art. The restless sea-king becomes stationary, as a great landholder. His followers are content to live at his side as small landholders and tenants. Property accumulates from industry. With the increase of property, better usage, better law, and a better administration of law, make their appearance. Men everywhere feel more secure in their persons and possessions. The steps in this course are slow and irregular, but they are real, and what is once gained is never wholly lost.

It is common to attribute these happy results to the usages of self-government with which our ancestors were familiar. The tithing, the hundred, and the county-court are all supposed to have been normal schools, in which the mind of the Anglo-Saxon was trained to understand, to appreciate, and to realize political liberty. But it should be remembered that such customs were by no means peculiar to the Anglo-

Saxons. They existed substantially in all the nations of Europe at that time, either as a continuance of the municipia of old Rome, or as native to the new settlers. They exist at this day under governments which know nothing of political liberty. The Russian villager has his commune, which with him is a lesser empire, and not to be resisted. The Chinese, also, have lived for ages under a scheme of local government much more elaborate and scientific than anything existing in this country before the Conquest. But all Europe has not inherited our political freedom. The people of Russia and of China have no conception of it.

How are we to account for this? The main reason, we think, is to be found in the fact that those forms of local government have been purely administrative. They have been restricted to the local administration of law. Their relation to a central authority possessing the power to make or to unmake law has been purely passive. It is possible that the institutions of a people should be such as to cause them to be sensible that to them it pertains, in their measure, to make law, as well as to administer it; and it is then that they become truly alive to the motives which dispose men to political action. Where the remedies for social evils are expected to come wholly from the government, the people are naturally passive. But it is otherwise where the community is aware that the means of amelioration are really in their own hands. It is in this feeling of the freeman's relation to the high court of Parliament, as well as to the courts of law, that we have the great secret of English liberty. The hundred court, and the county court, were good schools, but their efficiency would not have been great had they stood alone.

Not that the democratic element among our ancestors was very prominent, or very clearly defined. It was with Anglo-Saxon Britain in this respect as it was with Europe. It embraced the germs of all poli-

tical theories. First, there was the church, with her principle of theocracy. Then there was the crown, as the emblem of monarchy. Next came the earl and the thane, as representatives of the aristocratic power. Next the men of the hundred court, or of the borough court, as representing the democracy. The political history of England and of Europe is not the history of any one of these principles, but the history of them all; and consists especially in the history of the causes which have determined the measure of these respective influences in different countries at different times. In our own history, the combined influence of these different elements has given us results greatly more valuable than could have come from any one of them separately. The form in which our Anglo-Saxon laws gave protection to the person and property of the freeman, contained the seeds of all the liberties which later generations have been so careful to define, expand, and secure. In those laws something is due to the justice of the sovereign, more to the jealousy of the subject. To study our constitutional history under the Normans and Plantagenets, the Tudors and Stuarts, without the study of it under the Anglo-Saxons, would be to concern ourselves with effects apart from their causes. The usages and institutions of the men who fought under king Harold at Hastings, were to become to this country what their language has become.

In religion, the change which took place in the history of the Anglo-Saxons is not less observable than the change in their political and social life. It presents a conversion from heathenism to Christianity. It is true the Christianity embraced was imperfect, and had its admixtures of superstition. It was the Christianity of the church of that age, not the Christianity of the sacred writings, nor of the first century. But that church existed as a great moral power, in an age when force was almost the only recognised power. Brute power was thus confronted by a higher power.

An authority was introduced which was above human authority. The spiritual was declared to be above the temporal. To the latter men owed a bodily allegiance. To the former they owed the allegiance of mind. Only on the ground of this distinction can men know what is meant by liberty of conscience. The clergy claimed this spiritual liberty for themselves, and for their flocks, from the rude chiefs of those days. Unhappily, the dominion over mind which they denied to the magistrate, they were only too eager to exercise themselves. Nevertheless, it was no small matter to compel the world of action to do homage in this manner to the world of thought; and the time was to come when the arguments urged by the priest against the magistrate, were to be urged by the people against the priest. To learn that there are things in religion that do not belong to Cæsar, is the next step to learning that there are things in it that do not belong to the priest. On the whole, the Christianity professed by the Anglo-Saxons was the Christianity possible to them in their time, just as the principles of liberty which they realized were the principles possible to them in their circumstances. Their new faith, with all its faults, contributed to soften their manners, to strengthen their habits of industry, to infuse a more humane spirit into their social relations, to elevate and discipline their thoughts, and so to prepare them for laying that social groundwork on which their more favoured descendants have reared the constructions befitting a later age.

BOOK III.

NORMANS AND ENGLISH.

CHAPTER I.

THE NORMANS IN NORMANDY.

Origin of the Normans.

THE Normans were of the same race with the people variously designated as Saxons and Angles, Jutes and Frieslanders, Danes and Northmen. Often in feud at home, these bands of freebooters generally avoided dissension abroad. We have seen that their piratical expeditions date as far back as the second century; and they are continued until the settlement of the Norman power in this country, nearly nine centuries later. Every coast-land between the Baltic and the northern shores of Africa felt the scourge of their presence, more or less, during those many years. Charlemagne counselled his successors to keep a vigilant guard against this enemy on every shore and river. Louis-le-debonaire, in the early part of the ninth century, acted on this precaution. He repelled the attacks made in his time. He did more, he persuaded Harold, a Dane, then in possession of some Rhenish provinces, to profess himself a Christian.

It will be remembered that the attacks of the Northmen on Anglo-Saxon Britain began towards the close of the eighth century. In 835, and some subsequent years, the descents of the northern pirates on the shores of Gaul and Belgium were more than ever disastrous. In one Belgic city fifty-four churches are said to have been destroyed. They settled themselves

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at Walcheren, and did their best to possess themselves of island fortresses at the mouth of the Seine. Pestilence added its horrors to the terror inspired by the Scandinavian plunderers, and the dismay of the people filled the heavens with portents.

First invasion of Neustria.

The year 841 brings us to the first great invasion of Neustria, the future Normandy. In that year the king of France withdrew his ships from Rouen. The Northmen squadrons, which were always ready to assist each other on the understanding of being admitted to their share in the common booty, seized the moment to take possession of the mouth of the Seine. It happened that the tides were high, rushing strongly inland. The armament, under the direction of Oscar, its commander, made rapid way with the stream; and the Northmen glanced for the first time on the cornfields and orchards, on wood and dell, on church and monastery, village and town, on either side, as they shone brightly in the summer sun, and rested in that quietness and opulence which a long season of prosperity had secured to them. But those glances at the signs of so much wealth were taken while each man pulled at the oar with the full strength of his Norwegian arm, and used the rising tide to the utmost.

Spoils from Rouen.

Rouen, and the surrounding country, fell into the hands of the invaders. They occupied the city three days. When they descended the river, their spoil, in treasures of all descriptions, and in captives of both sexes, and of every rank, was a novelty, from its variety and value, even in the history of the Northman successes. Much was done by this enterprise towards preparing the way for the dukedom of Normandy.

Ragnar Lodbrog.

Four years later, the famous Ragnar Lodbrog, whose name is so disastrously associated with our own history, recaptured Rouen, and besieged and took the city of Paris. Lodbrog's track was marked by the usual devastations. He returned to Denmark laden with wealth. On this occasion, the crown of France

paid its first Danegelt. The enemy was thus bought off for a time, but for a short time only. Oscar was still roving from coast to coast at the head of a powerful fleet. Eric the Red, a chief of higher authority than Lodbrog in his own country, came abroad with a great armament. The shores of the Elbe, the Seine, and the Loire were all ravaged, now by one, now by another. Rivalries, like those which divided the states of the Heptarchy, divided the Continental princes, precluded combined and vigorous resistance, and the way was thus left open to the common enemy. In 857 Paris was again attacked. In 861 it was again taken. By this time many of the Northmen were settled on the lands which they had conquered. Large provinces were ceded to them by treaty. They married wives from the new country. Ground was thus laid for a gradual change of habits and religion. But wide was the sweep of disturbance which preceded this comparative rest. 'Take a map, and cover with vermilion 'the provinces, districts, and shores which the North-'men visited, as the record of each invasion. The 'colouring will have to be repeated more than ninety 'times successively before you arrive at the conclusion 'of the Carlovingian dynasty. Furthermore, mark, 'by the usual symbol of war, two crossed swords, the 'localities where battles were fought by or against the 'pirates; where they were defeated or triumphant; 'or where they pillaged, burned, or destroyed; and 'the valleys and banks of Elbe, Rhine, and Moselle, 'Scheldt, Meuse, Somme, and Seine, Loire, Garonne, 'and Adour, the inland Allier, and all the coasts and 'coast-lands between estuary and estuary, and the 'countries between the river streams, will appear 'bristling as with a chevaux-de-frise.'*

Rollo, first duke of Normandy.

Such was the force of the stream of migration which had set in when Rollo and his Northmen first entered the Seine, took possession of Rouen, and

* Palgrave's *History of England and Normandy.*

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settled there. Little credit is due to the accounts which have reached us concerning the early history of Rollo. Three generations, it seems, had passed away since his decease. before anything relating to him was committed to writing. We know, however, that he lived through the reigns of three French kings, and that he extorted concessions from them all. His first occupation of Rouen was in 876; but it is not until 911 that he becomes the settled and recognised lord of Normandy.

William I.

Rollo died at an advanced age. Who should succeed him was a question which he left professedly in the hands of his great men. But he recommended his son to that dignity. In this proceeding we see the influence of the voluntary and equal terms on which the confederations of the Northmen were based. But the Normans conformed themselves to the customs of the Franks in this particular, as in almost everything. William possessed none of the warlike tendencies of his father. The clergy, to whose care he had been entrusted from his youth, had trained him to other tastes. But, like many timid men, he could be treacherous and cruel; and he was himself deceived and murdered in the ninth year of his reign. He was

Richard I.

succeeded by his natural son Richard, a boy not ten years of age. This change brought its troubles. The Norman power in France was for a season in much danger. But the reign of Richard extended from 942 to 996. In his policy he took sides with the French monarchy, and showed himself friendly to the church and to churchmen. So great was the influence of the clergy on this grandson of Rollo, that at his death, he deemed himself unworthy of burial in a church, and desired that he might be laid by its outside wall, as near it as might be, but not within it. He was succeeded by his son Richard, surnamed the Good.

Richard II. —aggressive spirit of the Normans.

But Richard the Second was also a youth on his accession; and this circumstance was again the occasion of disturbance. The peasantry of Normandy

were grievously oppressed. They meditated an insurrection. But the leaders were seized, and their heads and hands were sent to be exposed in their respective villages. Some other dangers were also dealt with successfully. In his general policy Richard followed the steps of his father. He also kept up a friendly and prudent relation with his countrymen the Danes. His influence was great. The balance of affairs in France was in his hand. His military successes were considerable. But these were a natural result of the amount of military passion and ability at his disposal. Already the chivalry of Normandy had become much too formidable to be restricted to that province. It found outlets for itself, not only in every part of France, but in Spain, and in the south of Italy. One of Richard's vassals, Roger of Tosny, attacked the Moslems of Spain, and distinguished himself alike by his valour and his cruelties. He is said to have made his Moslem captives eat the flesh of their fellow Moslems, cut up and boiled like pork. The enterprises of the Normans in Italy and Sicily were more legitimate and honourable. Not only Sicily, but Apulia and Calabria fell into their hands. In fact, had the Normans been confined to France as a field of action at this juncture, France must have become Norman; and had not the crown of England become a tempting prize some years later, the crown of France would probably have been seized in its stead.

Richard III. Robert the Devil.

The just and beneficent reign of Richard II. came to a close in 1026, having extended to thirty years. He was succeeded by his eldest son, of the same name. But Richard III. was poisoned in the second year of his reign—poisoned, it is believed, through the influence of his younger brother Robert, who is known in history as his successor under the name of Robert the Devil. Robert was assailed on his accession from several quarters, but he succeeded in consolidating his power. And now this man of violent passions and dark deeds, resolved, as many like him in those ages

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had done, to become a religious devotee, and to perform a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. On his way home the fate befel him which had befallen his brother Richard — he was poisoned. This event paved the way for the accession of his illegitimate son William, who became William II. of Normandy, and William the Conqueror of England.

William II. —the Conqueror.

The early years of William, like those of all his predecessors, were years of inquietude and danger. His uncle, by his mother's side, saved him more than once from the machinations of his enemies, by removing him from his chamber under the cover of the night to some humble dwelling near it. In one instance the weapon designed for himself destroyed one of his household, who happened to be in his apartment. But William survived, and lived to subdue one enemy after another, until his power became more formidable than that of any man who had borne his title. His extraordinary capacity and energy contributed in part to this result. But other qualities had their share in producing it. William could deceive, could lie, could be pitiless, and could use the poisoned cup to remove impediments from the path of his ambition. Few men with the bad tendencies of human nature in such force have risen to such greatness. No man loved him. No man hoped for anything from his virtue. His seeming good was never good, it was always something meted out by personal considerations. Robert the Devil was his father: but he lacked some of the virtues even of such a sire, for Robert was at times genial, mirthful, and had a great contempt for money-getting, while his son William was reserved, gloomy, and hardly more remarkable for his ambition than for his covetousness.*

Society in Normandy.

It is now expedient that we should look a little more closely into the state of society in Normandy,

* See his character by a writer in the *Saxon Chronicle* (A.D. 1087) who had lived at his court, and evidently does not mean to do wrong to his memory.

seeing that the good or bad of that society is about to become so much our own.

Great revolution in manners.

One remarkable feature in the history of the Northmen in Normandy consisted in the readiness with which they threw off almost everything that had been characteristic of them down to the time of their settlement in that country. They retained their warlike habits, their pride, and their love of independence and adventure. But they adhered no longer to their Scandinavian customs; they soon ceased to speak their mother-tongue; they adopted the religion of the Franks, and with it their modes of legislation and of judicature, and their general usage. Some of these changes came more suddenly than others, but all came about, more or less, within a few generations.

We have no evidence that the Normans retained any vestige of the poetry which had exerted so much influence on some of the northern nations. So soon did they lose their native language, that they have not given us a single line in it, either in manuscript or in monument. What they were in the homes from which they came, and what prompted them to migrate from those homes, cannot be learnt from any memorials of their own. They could appreciate the more advanced civilization of their neighbours. They were a minority in the midst of a majority who spoke a superior language. They married wives in the new country who knew nothing of the speech of their husbands, nothing of the customs that had been familiar to them; and the mothers trained their children to their own ways and preferences. When the Christian clergy came to have some influence, that weight was thrown into the same scale.

Reception of Christianity—vicious lives of the clergy.

One of the earliest and most conspicuous of these changes was the adoption of Christianity. But in this event we see the impress of the Norman nationality. Among the Scandinavian nations the power of the priesthood was not great. Few men of that order would appear to have accompanied the migratory

bands who sought a home southward. When the Normans professed themselves Christians, quite a century passed before the clergy were allowed to assemble in synod or council—a course of things singularly different from what had taken place among the Anglo-Saxons. Among the latter, an exemption of delinquent priests from all responsibility to the secular magistrate was soon claimed and secured.* But the order were not soon to be so privileged in Normandy. The morals of the clergy, however, do not appear to have been improved by this course of proceeding towards them. It was notorious that priests in general kept their women; that prelates took money as the price of tolerating the disorder; and that the manners of those dignitaries were often most dissolute. Attempts to remove these scandals called forth riots in the streets, and even in the churches. With such things as possible among the clergy, we cannot expect much of the conduct proper to the Christian profession among the laity. So late as the first year in the eleventh century, some fifty years only before the Conquest, a French ecclesiastic, on being invited by the duke of Normandy to reform a corrupt monastery at Fécamp, refused, alleging as his reason that he knew the Normans to be rough and barbarous in their manners, and more inclined to destroy Christian edifices than to rear them.

Norman architecture.

But it must be admitted that the next half century produced considerable change in these respects. Norman architecture, both civil and ecclesiastical, made extraordinary advances. It is from this period that we must date what is now known as the Norman style, both in church and castle. Edifices of both descriptions were multiplied in all directions.

Learning.

Contemporary with the origin of Norman architecture is the rise of Norman learning. The earliest names, in the history of literature in Normandy,

* *Ancient Laws and Institutions*, 72, 74, 82, 147, 148, 155, 177, 305.

such as Dudo of St. Quentin, William of Jumièges, William of Poitiers, Lanfranc, and Anselm, come late, and they are the names of Italians and Frenchmen, not Norman names. But in the eleventh century Norman ladies began to read the ballad poetry of the time; and the Norman noble might be seen listening to the extravagant praise of himself or of his ancestors, from the lips of minstrels who seem to have been half-poets half-jugglers. The abbey of Bec, over which Lanfranc and Anselm presided in succession, became famous as a place of learning. The abbeys of St. Evroult, Jumièges, and Wandville had also their measure of celebrity on that ground. But the court of the first dukes, says a competent authority, 'though not exactly wanting in splendour, 'was, nevertheless, by no means a school of what, 'even at that time, was regarded as refinement. 'One of the pretexts used by Louis d'Outremer for 'taking the young duke Richard to his court was, 'that he might there receive a better education. 'Women appear to have had no influence at the court 'of Rouen. The dukes were in a great measure ruled 'by the clergy; instead of wives, they had concu-'bines. Not until the Conquest did the ideas of the 'Normans begin to expand themselves: their inter-'course with other nations made them acquainted with 'new branches of knowledge, and contributed to com-'merce and industry.'*

Defective civilization of the Normans.

* Benjamin Thorpe, in Lappenberg's *England under the Norman Kings*, 77–81. The following is Sir Francis Palgrave's description of a French camp so early as the middle of the tenth century: 'The French encampment might be seen spreading and stretching along the eastern bank of the Drive. In the rear was a fine and fertile mixture of hill and plain—magnificent was the spectacle exhibited, the tents and pavilions, their stuff fresh from the loom, unfrayed by use, undimmed by rain, their bright colours unfaded by the rays of the sun, in whose light they were for the first time shining. Amidst these thousand tents, snow-white and azure and scarlet, the golden pavilion of Louis, emulating Oriental splendour, arose conspicuous, surmounted by the radiant eagle, the heir-loom of Charlemagne's empire. Never had there been seen a more unsparing

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In regard to the 'commerce and industry' of the Normans there is little to be said. Commerce with distant nations did not occupy their thoughts. Their trade consisted almost wholly of such internal traffic as belongs naturally to all civilized communities. As conquerors they availed themselves of the productiveness of the land, and of the labour and skill which had wont to be bestowed upon it. The husbandman produced grain of the usual descriptions. Fruit appears to have been abundant. Fish were salted, and laid up for use. It has been made a reproach to our Saxon ancestors, that they fed so much on pork, and repaired so often to the beer barrel. But these coarse tastes, if such they were, appear to have been as common to the subjects of duke William as to those of king Harold. By the French the Normans were nicknamed the *beer-drinkers;* that beverage being so much more palatable to their true Scandinavian taste than wine, even when they had the means of substituting the one for the other. The forests of Normandy, like those of England, could hardly fail to make the vocation of the swineherd very common. Old Norman charters speak of forest range for such animals as a great privilege; and make little mention of cattle.

Serfs and peasants.

The condition of the cultivators of the soil in Normandy was one of sad depression. They were bound to the land on which they were born, and passed with it, from hand to hand, like any other portion of its stock. Their lord commanded their services at pleasure, either to till his ground, or to fight his battles. Time somewhat softened the rigours of this service, but the burden continued to be one hard to bear.

Norman legislature and government.

Whatever the legislation of the Normans may have been before their settlement in Normandy, their laws,

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display of noble armour, spirited horses, and a more brilliant and imposing array.'—*Hist. Normandy*, ii. 480. Such was the school to which the Normans were sent; and they learnt their lesson, but not so soon, nor to the end so perfectly, as some have supposed.

as known to us, are little distinguishable from those which obtained in France generally. Prominence was given to trial by ordeal, still more to trial by battle. In the feudal relations that subsisted, men held their lands so immediately from the duke, that no lord could seize them without trespass against the crown, as well as against the subject. Before his death, the Conqueror, as we shall see, assimilated the holdings of land in this country to this Norman usage. Nor is this the only particular in which, for better or worse, the laws of the one have become mixed with those of the other. The Great Council, the courts which have grown out of it, permanent judges, and even trial by jury, all have their relations to Anglo-Norman thought, as well as to the ancient institutions of this country.

Origin of chivalry.

The notion that the chivalry of Europe owes its origin to the Normans, is a wide conclusion deduced from narrow premises. Chivalrous no doubt they were, and in as high a degree perhaps as any race south of the Pyrenees. But the *Romance of Antar* shows that the form of culture we denote by that term was highly developed in the East long before it became observable in the West. The haughty Spaniard learnt it from his no less haughty antagonist the Moslem; and the Christian princes who resolved to possess themselves of Palestine, found the model of their unselfish devotion in the men who were no less resolved to dispute their pretensions on that point. We should not have had a Richard had there not been a Saladin. Chivalry comes from noble instincts common to humanity. The germs of it may be found widely scattered, and even among the rudest. Circumstances give it form and prominence. The Christian element in European chivalry has made it to be a chivalry of its own order.

Character of the Normans.

Such, then, were the Normans in Normandy. They bore no good-will to the French, though they were obliged to learn from them. Wace, the Norman poet, makes the Conqueror describe them as proud, litigious, and hard to govern; and another authority, who dad

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studied their character in Sicily, gives us their good and evil, by describing them as 'crafty, vindictive, 'domineering, eager to leave their country for the sake 'of greater gain abroad, dissembling, neither prodigal 'nor avaricious, devoted to the study of eloquence, 'lovers of the chase, hawking, horses, arms, and 'beautiful attire; in short, a people that must be held 'in check by the laws.'*

Story concerning Harold and William.

All our histories relate how the Norman education of Edward the Confessor disposed him, when he became king of England, to bestow his favours upon Normans; how William, duke of Normandy, visited his cousin Edward, inspected his dominions, and returned laden with presents; how, on the visit of Harold, son of the great earl Godwin, to Normandy, the duke declared that Edward had named him his successor to the English throne; and how he bound the Saxon by oath to favour his accession to that dignity. But there is an air of the improbable about this story. It should be remembered, that it was with the character of Harold after the Conquest, very much as it has been with the character of Cromwell since the Restoration. The reputation of both passed into hands that would be sure to heap almost every kind of wrong upon it.

Concerning this alleged promise of the Confessor, it is to be observed that Edward must have known that, in the absence of a direct heir, or even in the presence of one, it did not rest with him to name his successor. The decision of that question, according to the usages of the Anglo-Saxons, rested entirely with the Witanagemote, who always elected the next of kin when eligible, but who never scrupled to depart from that course when some good reason seemed to require it. In the next place, there is evidence that Edward, in accordance with this usage, made an effort

* Malaterra, cited in Thorpe's translation of Lappenberg's *England under the Norman Kings*.

to secure the succession to his nearest kinsman, Edward, the son of Edmund Ironside, and afterwards to the young Edgar, the grandson of that prince.* It is to be borne in mind, also, that the three earls named by William as having been present when the king of England is said to have made this promise, were all persons who were no longer living. Furthermore, the Anglo-Saxons knew nothing of this transaction, not even of Harold's visit to Normandy. The whole story rests on the authority of the Anglo-Norman writers, and these are all more or less inconsistent with each other in regard to time and circumstances. It is true, this alleged piece of history is presented at large on the famous Bayeux tapestry. But that tapestry is simply a putting of the story of the above writers into needlework. It may be an authority about the armour or the costume of those times—it is no authority in relation to history. It is probable that, for some one of the various purposes assigned, Harold may have visited Normandy, and equally probable, we think, that the other circumstances are merely convenient fictions grafted on that fact. The Godwin family were long the great antagonists of Norman influence in this country, and the penalty of pursuing that course, whether resulting from patriotism or from ambition, has come heavily upon their memory,

Death of the Confessor—Plans of William.

Edward, the son of Edmund Ironside, died soon after his landing in England. His son Edgar, at the time of the Conquest, was still a youth. In ordinary circumstances his claims would probably have been postponed in favour of some older and more efficient member of the royal family. Edward on his death-bed had commended Harold as his successor; and the

* *Chron. Sax.* ad an. 1064, 1065. Flor. Wigorn. ad an. 1054. Wendover, under the year 1057, says: 'Eadward, king of England, being advanced in years, sent Aldred, bishop of Worcester, into Hungary, and recalled thence Edward, son of king Edmund his brother, with the intention of making him his successor.'

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men who afterwards declared him king, did so no doubt from the conviction that his leadership gave them their only chance of saving the country. The duke of Normandy was in the park near Rouen, attended by knights, and squires, and pages—had strung his bow, and was about to enjoy the pleasures of the chase, when a messenger arrived, who drew him aside, and informed him that the king of England was no more, and that all the great men at his funeral had united in proclaiming Harold his successor. The duke changed countenance, became deeply agitated, loosened and fastened his mantle, and without uttering a word, or any one venturing to speak to him, he hastened to a boat and crossed the Seine. On entering the hall of his palace, he threw himself upon a bench, drew his mantle over his face, and rested his head for support. This paroxysm over, he informed his attendants of what had happened, and soon convened a large parliament of his nobles, who, after not a few expressions of misgiving, agreed to become his confederates in his proposed invasion of England. The feeling of the majority was, that success in England was by no means certain, and that, if realized, it must be fatal to Normandy. The duke, however, overcame this difficulty. The contributions to be made by each to the great armament were fixed, and it is important to observe, that the joint nature of the enterprise, of course implied that there should be a joint distribution both of spoil and of power. Profuse were the promises of this nature then made.*

Confidence of Harold.

William did not obtain much assistance beyond his own territories. But the pope sent him a consecrated banner and his blessing. Harold, though he had founded an abbey, had nothing monastic in his nature. He was not formed to be a favourite with the clergy. If he knew anything of the injurious representations

* *Roman de Rou*, v. 10983 et seq. Lappenberg's *England under the Anglo-Saxon Kings*, ii. 282–287.

made concerning him in Rome, he did nothing to refute them. He relied on his own strong Englishmen, and believed that by their aid he might safely defy the Normans. This confidence arose in part from the numbers that flocked to his standard; still more from the reports concerning the numbers of the enemy which had been sent him by his treacherous correspondent Count Baldwin of Flanders.

Landing at Pevensey.

On the morning of the twenty-eighth of September, 1066, a strange vessel was seen approaching the Sussex coast near Hastings. It anchored not far from the shore. Soon three or four other vessels came in sight from the same point. In a few hours, the number of sails multiplied, until the surface of the sea seemed covered as with a forest. In that first vessel was the duke of Normandy—in the rest were some 50,000 men-at-arms, exclusive of a large body of infantry.* The whole fleet swept along the coast in sight of old Beachy Head, and in the inlet to the north of it, now known as Pevensey Bay, the invaders disembarked.

Military epochs in English history.

More than ten centuries had passed since a similar armament was seen approaching this island under the command of Cæsar; and more than six centuries since the keels of Hengist the sea-king landed their complement of fighting men on the coast of Kent. So the great epochs of Révolution by the Sword have been marked in our history.

The summer of 1066.

Harold, as one of his misfortunes, had to face two powerful armies, in distant parts of the kingdom, almost at the same time. Rumours concerning the intentions and preparations of the duke of Normandy soon reached England. During the greater part of the summer, Harold, at the head of a large naval and military force, had been on the watch along the English coast. But months passed away, and no enemy became visible. William, it was said, had become aware of the measures which had been taken to meet

* Ordericus, lib. iii. c. 14.

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him. It was believed by many that his followers had become distrustful and divided. Many supposed that, on various grounds, the enterprise had been abandoned. Provisions also, for so great an army, became scarce. The men began to disperse; and Harold, disbanding the remainder, returned to London.*

Invasion under Tostig and Hardrada.

But the news now came that Harald Hardrada, king of Norway, had landed in the north, and was ravaging the country in conjunction with Tostig, Harold's elder brother. This event came from one of those domestic feuds which did so much at this juncture to weaken the power of the English.

Feuds between the great Anglo-Saxon families—Tostig.

Tostig had exercised his authority in Northumbria in the most arbitrary manner, and had perpetrated atrocious crimes in furtherance of his objects. The result was an amount of disaffection which seems to have put it out of the power of his friends to sustain him. He had married a daughter of Baldwin, count of Flanders, and so was brother-in-law to the duke of Normandy. His brother Harold, as he affirmed, had not done a brother's part towards him, and he was more disposed, in consequence, to side with the Norman than with the Saxon in the approaching struggle. The army with which he now appeared, consisted mostly of Norwegians and Flemings, and their avowed object was to divide not less than half the kingdom between them. Mercia, as thus menaced, naturally took part with the men of Wessex. But in Mercia also there was disaffection and distrust. Harold had come into severe collision with Leofric, the powerful earl of that province; and subsequently with his successor, the great Alfgar. It is true, both those great men were now dead, and Harold had married Eadgyth, a daughter of Alfgar. But the marriage could hardly have been a happy one. Eadgyth was a woman of great ambition, and unscrupulous in her use of means to gratify her passions. Her brothers, the young earls

* *Chron. Sax.* 1066. Fl. Wigorn.

Edwin and Morcar, appear to have been estimable men, and were much beloved. But there is room to think that, being themselves of the family of Leofric, they were not altogether pleased in seeing a member of the rival family of Godwin on the throne. They summoned their forces, however, to repel the invasion under Tostig. Before Harold could reach the north, they hazarded an engagement at a place named Fulford, on the Ouse, not far from Bishopstoke. But their measures were not wisely taken. They were defeated with great loss.*

Defeat of Edwin and Morcar at Fulford.

The invaders seem to have regarded this victory as deciding the fate of that part of the kingdom. They obtained hostages at York, and then moved to Stamford Bridge, where they began the work of dividing the northern parts of England between them. But in the midst of these proceedings clouds of dust were seen in the distance. The first thought was, that the multitude which seemed to be approaching must be friends. But the illusion was soon at an end. The dust raised was by the march of an army of West-Saxons under the command of Harold. The Norwegians, in their false confidence, had not kept well together. Tostig, who knew what was to be expected from an army of Wessex men under such leadership, advised a retreat. But the Norwegian king was a man of renown in his own land. It was not for him to take a course that would look so much like cowardice. An engagement was accordingly inevitable.

Battle of Stamford Bridge.

Tostig and his Flemings were marshalled apart. Presently, a body of twenty horsemen, completely cased in armour, approached this division, and one of their number called for a man who should take a message from Harold to his brother Tostig.' The man so addressed, answered 'I am Tostig.' 'Then,' said the other, 'King Harold sends to thee his good-will, and

Parley between Harold and Tostig.

* Sim. Dunelm. H. Hunt. Marian. Scot. Fl. Wigorn. *Sax. Chron.*

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'this message—he tends to thee peace, and all North-'umbria; yea, he will not grudge a third of his king-'dom to have thee as his faithful friend.'—'Why has 'not this come before? much blood has now been spilt,' said Tostig. 'But what of Hardrada the Norwegian, 'what recompence for him?'—'Seven feet of England's 'earth,' was the reply, 'and as much more as his 'length is beyond that of other men,' said the Saxon. 'Then go to thy master,' was the answer, 'and tell 'him to prepare for battle, for Norwegian men shall 'never say that Tostig played false to their king in 'the land of his enemies.' These words seem to say that Tostig, hard man, and man of blood that he was, had some good thing in him. Hardrada had observed from a distance the high bearing of the horseman from the Saxon ranks, and was not the more assured of success in the approaching struggle on being told that it was Harold himself. For just before, the northern chief, conspicuous from his costume, and a man whose high stature raised him above all men near him, had not kept his seat, as it was manifest Harold could. Through a false step of his horse, he had been thrown to the ground. Harold saw the accident, and when told that the chief who had fallen was his great rival Hardrada of Norway, he turned to his followers, and said, 'a most stately person, truly; but, you see, 'my friends, his luck is already gone from him.' And now the work of death began.

Battle of Stamford Bridge.

The Norwegian infantry were formed into a hollow circle. Their shields were linked together, so as to present a tortoise line of defence. Their spears were planted in the ground before them, and pointed breast-high towards the enemy, to check the onset of cavalry. The light archers were so placed as to gall the foe wherever the pressure should become most dangerous. So long as the Northmen preserved their solid line, and kept their spears in position, neither infantry nor cavalry made much impression on them. The Saxons seemed to grow weary in their repeated attacks with-

out result. Whereupon the Norwegians grew more bold. Men here and there began to rush forward from the ranks. This brought on the crisis. The Saxons seized the favourable moment, broke the line of the enemy, and sent disorder and death wherever they came. In vain did the strong arm of Hardrada deal destruction on many a foeman. His followers were losing ground, when an arrow entered his neck, and he fell to the earth to expire. Victory now seemed to declare for the Saxon. But suddenly a large body of Norwegians, who had been hastening to the field from a distance, made their appearance. Harold and his men had now to begin their work anew. But they were still strong in hand and heart. Tostig refused all terms. He fell, as Hardrada had fallen, doing all that valour could do to turn the tide of the conflict against his assailants. One strong Norwegian kept the narrow pass of the bridge over the Derwent against all comers, killing, it is said, some forty assailants with his own hand. He was only vanquished when his enemies contrived to assail him in front and rear. So ended one of the most stubborn and destructive battles in English history. The victory of the Wessex men was complete.*

Men of after generations saw the bones of the slain bleaching on the surface of that field. But no trace of the past is now to be seen there. The green meadow-slopes drop gently and gracefully, from opposite lines, towards the waters of the Derwent. The barge floats safely along in the course of a canal not far from the river-side. The quiet village street, and scattered village homes, may now be seen there on either hand. The bridge where the strong Norwegian kept his own so long, has been displaced by one on which his task would have been more difficult, and one beside which there now rises a lofty viaduct, along

* *Chron. Sax.* Fl. Wigorn. Marian. Scot. Ordericus. Adam. Brem. lib. i. R. Higden. Snorre, cc. 86–93.

which, as we remember, the rush of modern travel disturbed our imagination as it seemed to be bringing back to us the rush of the ancient battle.

Harold's limited resources.

The battle of Stamford Bridge was fought on the 26th of September. It was, as we have seen, on the morning of the 28th, that the strange sail made its appearance not far from Hastings, which proved to be the herald of the great Norman armament. The news of the landing of the Normans was conveyed to Harold in great haste, while resting with his army in York. Now the crisis had come. How was it to be met? Northumbria, so far from rendering help, required the presence of a considerable force to ensure tranquillity. Mercia, represented by the brothers-in-law of Harold, the earls Edwin and Morcar, was cold in his behalf, and could hardly, perhaps, have been brought into the field with much effect so soon after the disastrous battle of Fulford. The Danes, forming so large a portion of the population, both in Northumbria and Mercia, were openly indifferent to the pending struggle; or, if inclined either way, were with the Normans rather than with the Saxons. We see the fruit of this Danish policy in the special favour so often shown to that people by the Normans in after time. Harold, accordingly, was obliged to rest almost wholly on the pure Saxon element of the south. Hence the force which he was able to bring together was hardly superior to the invaders in regard to numbers, and much inferior to them in regard to military experience and equipment. Not a few of his followers consisted of patriotic men who volunteered their services almost unarmed, having no better weapons to use than a club or a fork, a pike or a sling. In the Norman army the proportion of cavalry was enormous, such as should in itself have sufficed for the conquest of almost any kingdom in Europe. But in this respect the army under Harold was weak, as all Anglo-Saxon armies had hitherto been.

William's proposals.

William tried the effect of negotiation before appeal-

ing to the sword. He was willing, he said, to cede to Harold the whole of England north of the Humber; and to his brother Gyrth, all the lands that had been in possession of the late earl Godwin; or he would leave the issue to a single combat, to the judgment of the pope, or even to a decision on the basis of Norman or English law. But Harold appears to have seen, that in the posture to which affairs had come, the only choice left to England was either to free itself of the Normans, or to become their victim. The hollowness of the fairest of these promises, if accepted, would soon become manifest. The strong, obtaining a footing at all, would be sure to crush the weak, on the first convenient occasion.

Harold's reply.

Hence the reply of Harold to these proposals was, that he possessed the crown of England according to the will of the late king, and according to the suffrage of the nobles and people of the land. On these grounds he demanded that the duke and his followers should at once depart from the kingdom. That Harold declined the challenge to single combat because he remembered his broken vow, and that his own brother Gyrth urged, for that reason, that he should not oppose himself to William even in the field, are only portions of the Norman tale on this subject. No native authority makes any such report, though the king had his enemies even among the Saxons.

During the first fortnight after leaving their ships, the Normans ravaged the lands of Sussex and the neighbourhood—lands of which the Godwin family were, for the most part, the owners. Harold hastened his measures, and joined the army at Hastings on the evening of the 13th of October. Not much more than half the force known to be at his disposal had assembled; and a body of Danish auxiliaries, sent to his assistance by the Danish king Svend, had imbibed the feeling of their race in England, and refused to fight against the duke. Harold had hoped to surprise the Normans by an attack on their camp in the fol-

lowing night. But William heard at once of his arrival, and knew that the advantage of delay would be wholly on the side of the English. Every hour would add to their numbers, and would add to the difficulty of providing for the wants of his own army, without bringing him the least additional support. He decided, accordingly, that the foemen should meet on the following day.

During that night the Norman ecclesiastics administered the offices of religion to such as were disposed to attend to them. The duke partook of the eucharist. The Saxon camp, we are told—how truly we know not—presented a different scene. The night was there spent, it is said, in feasting and carousing. We know that among the followers of Harold were those who had been accustomed to camp life. They had many of them been engaged in hot wars with the Welsh; and at Stamford Bridge they had just tried their metal successfully against the bravest that the old home of these Normans could send against them. Harold and his army should, perhaps, have been less self-reliant. Certainly an undue fear of their enemies cannot be laid to their charge; and those enemies well knew that the event only could declare what the result of meeting this new enemy would be.

The battle of Hastings.

At length came the morning light of that memorable day — the 14th of October, 1066. William addressed his chiefs in terms intended to satisfy them in regard to the justice of their cause, and to assure them of its success. While thus employed, a messenger, whose horse and person were covered with armour, rode up to say the time had come to arm. In placing his coat of mail over his head, the duke happened to turn the hind part before. He saw that the awkward incident was observed, and, to prevent unfavourable impressions, he said that so it had been with his fortune, the right thing came last, he had been duke, he should soon be king.

William arranged his army in three divisions. The

third division he commanded himself, and there his own banner waved. Concerning the manner in which the Saxons acquitted themselves on that day we know little or nothing from the Saxons themselves. The version of the conflict which has its place in all our histories, is wholly the Anglo-Norman version. Nevertheless, even through these sources, enough becomes known to make it evident that the countrymen of Alfred were not wanting in prowess on the field of Hastings, or in the strength which can endure as well as dare.

The position chosen by Harold was on a moderately rising ground, for strictly speaking there are no hills near. His army was drawn out in a wedge form, with compact lines, protected by a wall of shields, and by strong palisading. The men of London, according to ancient usage, formed the guard of the king, and bore his standard. The men of Kent, on the same ground, claimed to be placed in front, and to strike the first blow. As the Normans advanced, Harold saw, from their equipment, their numbers, and the large proportion of cavalry, that treacherous reports had led him to underrate the strength of his enemies. But the usual war cries rose fearlessly, from Norman and Saxon alike, as the former commenced the onslaught. The great military bard Taillefer had prayed that he might be allowed to strike down the first Englishman. Rushing in advance, he accomplished his object. But the Saxons were instantly upon him, and the bold minstrel was the next among the slain. This daring adventure had inspirited the Normans. But it availed not. The line of the Saxons was not to be broken. Their steady pressure sent disorder among the Norman infantry, and, at the same time, a portion of the Norman cavalry fell into a concealed trench. The chiefs among the invaders became alarmed. Many of them evinced the utmost bravery. No man was more conspicuous in urging the wavering to firmness than Odo, the martial bishop of Bayeux, brother to the duke.

But the confusion continued to increase. First the left wing, composed of Bretons and mercenaries, fled. Next the third division, where the duke commanded, and where his banner was visible, was seen in retreat. Gyrth sent his spear through the horse on which William rode. Another was seized from the nearest knight. But so thick were the death strokes near the person of the duke, that a second horse, and a third, fell under him. In the last instance, the commander owed his rescue to the timely aid of the count Eustace. The flying men gave out that the duke had fallen, and that all was lost. But William flew to the quarter of the panic, removed his helmet from his head, and called loudly on the fugitives to rally, and to save themselves by brave deeds from an ignominious destruction. This appeal was not in vain, and was most seasonable; for by this time a large body of the Normans found themselves in the rear of an advanced body of the English, and added a vigorous onset from that quarter, to the resistance presented by the duke in front. Of this division of the English, assailed thus from all sides, very few escaped. The Normans now renewed their attack on the main body. But the Saxon lines seemed invincible. At nine o'clock the signal for battle had been given. Through six hours this death-strife had been protracted, and there was no sign of victory on either side. The duke now remembered the success of an early hour of the day, when chance drew some of the Saxons from their position. He resolved to attempt doing by stratagem, what had then been done without forecast. He arranged for the apparent flight of a large division. The unsuspecting Saxons rushed on the rear of their enemies, heaping taunt and sarcasm upon them with every blow. But presently the duke gave the signal to halt, and to form the lines. The Saxons now saw their error. The fate which had befallen the advanced division in the morning, now befel a much larger number in the evening. The

loss thus sustained by the English was great—irretrievable; but neither party would seem to have seen it to be so. Many extraordinary deeds were done by heroic Saxons when this dark hour of the day had come. But no names are mentioned. That honour was reserved by the Anglo-Norman writers for the distinguished men of their own race. William, it is said, had eagerly sought for Harold, and once fell on a bold Saxon thane, supposing he had found him. The thane beat in the helmet of his assailant, and would have changed the future of English history, had not the attendants of the commander come to his deliverance. Thus did hope and fear rock against each other through that live-long day. Even as the sun is going down, a body of cavaliers, with the brave count Eustace at their head, are seen flying in the direction of the royal standard; and as the count bends towards the ear of the duke in passing, to say in a subdued voice, that retreat is unavoidable, the blow from a pursuing Saxon falls between his shoulders, sends the blood from his mouth and nostrils, and he sinks to the ground. It was this count Eustace who had saved the life of the duke in the morning. But to William, retreat was worse than death. He looked to the point where Harold's standard was yet seen, surrounded by the flower of his army. Were there no Normans left who could rush in there, and seize that ensign? Some twenty men of rank volunteered to lead the way thither. The greater part of them perished. But their work was done. The archers had raised their bows higher than before. The fatal arrow pierced the eye of the king. His two faithful brothers, Gyrth and Leofwin, fell by his side. Soon only the dead or dying of king Harold's army were on the plain. As the darkness came once more to the quiet earth, it fell on thane and peasant, on ecclesiastics and nobles, thickly strewed together. But they had done their best in defence of their own homeland.

Among the armed combatants who there fell, were an English abbot and eleven of his monks. England is not to have another Saxon king—is never to see another Saxon army.*

* Guil. Pictav. W. Malms. H. Huntingdon. Ordericus. Fl. Wigorn., *Roman de Rou. Chron. Sax.* These authorities are not all agreed in their descriptions of this memorable battle. The account in the text may, we think, be accepted as correct. 'How great, think you, must have been the slaughter of the conquered, when that of the conquerors is reported, upon the lowest estimate, to have exceeded ten thousand? Oh, how vast a flood of human gore was poured out in that place where these unfortunates fell and were slain! What dashing to pieces of arms, what shrieks of dying men! In the contemplation of it our pen fails us.'—*Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, translated by Marc Antony Lower, A.M. Ordericus makes the Norman loss 15,000.

CHAPTER II.

THE CONQUEST IN ITS RELATION TO PROPERTY.

WILLIAM paused awhile after the victory at Hastings, expecting some signs of submission from the people. But the signs came not. He then ravaged several counties, and was afterwards laid up with sickness during some weeks near Canterbury. The English made no use of this occasion. It only served to show that the leadership necessary to any formidable resistance had ceased to exist. The Conqueror next took up his position at Berkhamstead, for the purpose of intercepting any communication that might be attempted between the north and south. At that place young Edgar, grandson of the Ironside, and heir, as we have seen, to the English throne, presented his submission. Stigand, archbishop of Canterbury, Eldred, archbishop of York, with many other persons of rank, followed this example. The Londoners had proclaimed and crowned Edgar as king; but, deserted and alone, they felt that resistance would be worse than useless.

Submission of the English.

The followers of the Conqueror now became impatient to see the English crown placed upon his brow. It was determined, accordingly, that the ceremony of his coronation should take place at Christmas. On that occasion the abbey church of Westminster was decorated as when the sovereigns of England were wont to be greeted there by the loyal acclamations of the 'best' of the land. William knew that his own ear was not to be thus greeted. Triple lines of soldiers fenced off the road between his camp and the minster. All the avenues immediately about the edifice were

Coronation of the Conqueror.

guarded by cavalry. In the train of the duke followed two hundred and sixty Norman chiefs. When Eldred, archbishop of York, put the question to those chiefs, and to the few Saxons present: 'Will ye have William 'duke of Normandy for your king?' the shout of the Normans was so loud, that the horsemen in the street suspecting, or pretending to suspect, some treason, began to set fire to the neighbouring houses. The parties within the church, becoming in their turn alarmed, rushed nearly all into the open air. But a few trembling ecclesiastics remained, and received from the lips of the scarcely less trembling king, the pledge that he would govern the English people according to their own laws, and in all things as justly and humanely as the best of their kings had governed them.*

William's ground of claim to the throne.

William did not affect to take possession of the crown of England by the right of conquest. He claimed to be accepted as king in virtue of his relationship to Edward the Confessor, and according to the alleged will of that monarch. This pretension may have been invalid—absurd; but, nevertheless, it was on this pretension that William professed to ground his right, and not on the sword. In consonance with this policy, he came, according to his own language, not to subvert, but to uphold the existing laws. It is true his claim had been resisted, and there were grave penalties awaiting those who had made that resistance. But William professed to distinguish between those who had taken part with the late usurper, and the nation at large, which, as he pretended, had not been a party to that proceeding. Measures were soon taken to secure the names of all persons who had fought against him, or who had in any way aided or encouraged those who had so done.† And we know that the persons who might be compre-

* Ordericus, lib. iv. c. i. Malms. lib. iii. Guil. Pictav. 205, 206. Eadmer, 6. Brompton, 961. Guil. Newburg. 3.

† Guil. Pictav. Madox's *History of the Exchequer*, folio. *Dialogus de Scaccario.* Hale's *History of the Common Law*, chap. v.

hended under the one or the other of these descriptions, would include nearly the whole nation. Still, a distinction was made, between those who had shown disaffection, and those who had not; and in affecting to restrict his penalties to the former class, William claimed the credit of doing only as any lawful sovereign would have done in the same circumstances.

Displacement of the Saxons.

But it soon became manifest that the victory at Hastings had not subdued disaffection. New hostilities not only prepared the way for new confiscations, but furnished pretexts for a more rigorous application of the general law of retribution. Rapacity, and the love of power, so conspicuous both in the king and his followers, disposed them, as such events arose, to look on the country more and more as a conquered country, to be dealt with at their pleasure. William, indeed, never ceased to speak of his office as king of England as his by right and inheritance; and this idea continued to the last to influence many of his proceedings. But when his passions were roused, or his followers become clamorous, his schemes of spoliation expanded, so as to evince little respect for law or custom. The Danes, as they had not joined the struggle between the Saxon and the Norman, were allowed generally to retain their possessions. But in less than twenty years, the Saxon landlord was displaced, over the greater part of the kingdom, by the Norman. Norman castles made their appearance in all parts of the country, and the strangers by whom they were garrisoned, became known among the natives by the name of the 'castle-men.'

In carrying out this great scheme of plunder in our history, the king himself set a fruitful example. He claimed, not only all the lands, but all the treasure and moveables of the former kings of England. He descended so far as to enrich himself by robbing churches of their ornaments, and by appropriating articles of rarity and value from the shops of tradesmen. From the accumulations thus made, William

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sent costly presents to the pope, in return for his blessing. Similar acknowledgments were made to churches in Normandy, where many prayers had been offered for the success of his enterprise. What the king did in London, the barons, and many inferior men, did in many towns and cities.*

Distribution of manors.

The word *manor* is of Norman origin, and seems to have been used to denote a considerable estate, with a house or *mansion* upon it as the residence of its owner. The crown lands recorded in the *Domesday Book* include more than 1400 manors, besides other properties not fully described. The earl of Moretaine, the Conqueror's half-brother, became possessed of nearly 800 manors, spread over nineteen counties. The earl of Bretagne, who commanded the rear in the battle of Hastings, had 442. Odo, bishop of Bayeux, brother to William, had 439, which gave him authority in seventeen counties. The bishop of Coutance, who, in common with Odo, was also a soldier, had 280. Roger de Bresli had 174 in Nottinghamshire. Ilbert de Laci had 164, chiefly in Yorkshire. William Perceval, the Conqueror's natural son, had 162. Robert de Sanford, 150. Roger de Laci, 116. Hugh de Montfort, more than 100. William de Warren had territorial allotments in Sussex, and in eleven other English counties.†

These instances are enough to suggest what the scheme of distribution was which took place immediately after the Conquest. The lands seized by Wil-

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* *Chron. Sax.* 1066–1070. Simeon Dunelm. 200. Mat. West. Roger Wendov.

† Ellis's *Introduction to Domesday*, lxxii. Brady's *Introduction*, 13. Hutchins's *Dissert. on Domesday Book*, 11, 27, 49, 118. It is due to the Conqueror to state, that he evidently had not in all cases power to restrain his followers from the work of destruction and pillage on which they were bent. It appears, also, from *Domesday*, that some men seized upon estates without his authority, and held them by no other title than their own will. These lands are described in the record as *invasiones*—denoting that they had been seized, and were retained, as above stated.—Ellis's *Introduction*, x.

liam were either crown lands, or those which had been in the possession of the most considerable families, such as the Godwins, and the Alfgars of Mercia. From the other parts of the country, his followers received such allotments as were deemed appropriate to their rank, or to their past services.*

Case of Brihtric.

When Exeter was taken—for that city had dared to resist the Conqueror after the battle of Hastings—an incident occurred which showed how much caprice and passion had to do with these proceedings. Brihtric, a rich Saxon of Devonshire, had been ambassador from king Edward to the count of Flanders. Matilda, then the unmarried daughter of the count of Flanders, now the queen of England, had cherished a passion for the Englishman, to which the latter, it is said, made no response. On the fall of Exeter, the time came for a distribution of estates in Devonshire, and for Matilda to be avenged on Brihtric. He was seized by Normans while engaged in the consecration of a chapel on his own manor of Hanley, and thrust into prison at Winchester, where he died. The person of the delinquent being thus disposed of, the queen shared considerably in his estates.†

Opinion of Selden and Hale.

Selden and Judge Hale affirm that no Englishman was deprived of his possessions by the Conqueror simply on the ground of his being an Englishman.‡ This may be true; but what was the nature of the pretexts which too often served as a covering for such proceedings on the part of the king himself, and, still

* 'Thus strangers were enriched with England's wealth, while her sons were iniquitously slain, or sent into hopeless exile into foreign lands. It is stated that the king himself received daily 1060*l.* 2*s.* 6¾*d.* sterling money from the regular revenues in England alone, independently of presents, fines for offences, and many other matters which come into a royal treasury.'—Ordericus, bk. iv. c. 7. William added greatly to the sufferings of his tenants by farming his estates to the highest bidders.—Guil. Pictav. 208. *Chron. Sax.* Ordericus, iv. 7.

† Ellis's *Introd.* ii. 54. Thierry, bk. i. 353. Lappenberg's *England under the Normans*, 122, 123.

‡ Selden, *Notæ Eadmer.* Hale's *Hist. Common Law*, c. v.

more, on the part of his followers? The church and abbey lands were generally undisturbed; and for a while a few distinguished Saxons, of both sexes, were allowed to retain possession of estates. But Eadric the Forester, who disputed the Norman sway in Herefordshire, and along the Welsh border, seems to have been the only Saxon who, having taken arms against the invaders, was found in possession of his lands twenty years after the Conquest.* And from that time we discover no trace of men of wealth or position among the natives. In general, the English became tenants where they had been landlords; and the humbler classes passed, with the estates on which they had long dwelt, into the hands of the new masters. No thanks to the Normans if the English were generally accepted as labourers and as tenants, and even on reasonable conditions. The land was of small value except on such terms. *Domesday Book* shows that the men who cultivated and occupied the land after the Conquest, were much the same as before that even

Feudal tenures.

With this great change, in regard to the possessors of property, came another regarding the tenures on which property should be held. Some learned men account feudal tenures as not older in England than the Conquest. Others insist that they were familiar to the Anglo-Saxons long before. Both these opinions, though the contrary of each other, have their measure of truth.‡ It is certain that some of the elements of the feudal system were not unknown among the Saxons and the Danes in this country before the Conquest.§ But it was left to the Conqueror to extend that system to the whole kingdom, and to establish it definitely, after the Continental model. Under William, all the holders of land in England, became either tenants to the crown,

* Lappenberg, 117. † Ellis's *Introd.* cc. 11–14.

‡ Judge Hale is disposed to date feudal tenures in England from the Conquest.—*Hist. Com. Law*, c. v. But Coke, Selden, Nathaniel Bacon, Temple, Saltern, and the author of the *Mirror* date them much earlier.

§ See pp. 239–241.

or subtenants to those who were such; and the conditions of the holding—or the virtual rent to be paid—both by the tenant in chief, and by the subtenant, were the same. The lesser vassal owed to his lord, whatever his lord, as the greater vassal, owed to the king. In this manner, all the lands of England were legally vested in the king, and the uses of them only pertained to the subject.

Knight service and soccage.

What we have ventured to call the virtual rent of the land was twofold. It consisted in what was known by the name of *knight service* and *soccage*. Knight service bound the tenant to supply the king with a certain military force when required. Soccage consisted in the obligation to render other services, not military, to the landlord, such as ploughing his ground, or supplying his table, according to stipulation. It is supposed that many of the serfs were allowed by the Normans to cultivate small portions of land, on certain conditions, and that this class rose by degrees, under the name of *villeins*, to have a permanent and legal interest in their lands in the nature of *copyhold*. The religious houses were exempt from the obligation to knight service, on the ground that the owners of such lands were men occupied in religious duties, but in reality, we presume, on the ground that they were expected to keep large hospitality.

Military power of the Normans in England.

England was thus covered with a great military network. The Normans became, what the English had never become, a compact organization, a potent unity. This power was everywhere diffused, but lost nothing by diffusion. The isolation was apparent, not real. The word might be given at any moment, and armed men sprang up in all places under the standard of their respective leaders. What the Tower of London became to the Conqueror, the fortresses with which the land was now studded became to the barons. Nor was this system, so readily established, of short duration. It descends in its entireness to the sons of the first chiefs, and exerts a powerful

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influence on the institutions of this country for centuries to come. By this means the first Norman king had not less than 50,000 armed men always at his disposal.*

State of the towns.

In the wrongs which befel this country after the battle of Hastings, the householder in the town shared hardly better than the landholder in the country. The dwelling-place of the burgher, and the acres of the agriculturalist, were seized in the same spirit. One effect of these proceedings was, that many of the towns were almost depopulated. Those who plundered them scared away the people. Many suffered much from fire. In others, almost whole streets were pulled down to supply material for castle-building. Lincoln possessed 1150 houses before the Conquest; afterwards, 166 were demolished to erect the castle, and 100 were without inhabitants. Norwich was a wealthy city. In the time of Edward the Confessor it included 1320 houses, and soon after the Norman ascendency nearly half that number had disappeared. Chester, Derby, and York, all suffered much on the same scale, and Oxford more than any one of them. Many of the spoliators of the first generation were low men, whose coarse insolence was often more difficult to bear than their rapacity and oppression.†

* Ordericus, lib. v. c. 1, 7. Reeve's *History of English Law*, i. c. 2.

† 'Ignorant upstarts, driven almost mad by their sudden elevation, wondered how they arrived at such a pitch of power, and thought that they might do whatever they chose.'—Ordericus, iv. c. 8.

CHAPTER III.

THE CONQUEST IN ITS RELATION TO THE PEOPLE.

How the Battle of Hastings came to be so decisive.

IT has sometimes been accounted strange that a single battle should have sufficed to transfer a great kingdom into wholly new hands. But the event admits of explanation. The trial of strength, as we have seen, was not so much between Normandy and England, as between Normandy and Wessex. Northumbria was in disorder and weakness. Mercia stood aloof. The first had little power to render assistance; the second happened to be in weak hands, and seems to have looked with jealousy on the elevation of the Godwins in the person of Harold. It should be remembered, moreover, that England at that time possessed few places of strength. It had castles, but they were rarely seen, and were nowhere formidable. Some of its cities had walls and gates. But in general they were open to assault from any quarter. Hence an enemy ascendant in the field, might soon become ascendant everywhere. The nation did not at that time possess the wealth necessary to guard itself effectually from danger either upon the land or the deep. It had to provide for its safety on both elements, and for centuries had found great difficulty in so doing. It should be borne in mind, also, that England at that juncture was not more wanting in places of great strength, than in great men to command them. Earl Waltheof, son of the late veteran soldier Siward, was, like his sire, both strong and brave, and, as we may believe, devout and honest. But that is nearly all we know of him. If the north was to act at all, it was through him. But he does not

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seem to have been a man of real power. The young earls Edwin and Morcar had Mercia in their hands, but evidently knew not how to use it. Some other Saxon names come to the surface. But, in fact, Harold was the only man possessing the combination of civil prudence and military capacity demanded by the crisis. No such man survived the battle of Hastings. The Dane, as we have seen, took no part against the Norman; and even the clergy were in a great degree quiescent rather than active. Harold made little effort to secure the adhesion of the priesthood. Some tonsured men fought by his side in his last battle, but William came with the pope's benediction, and the conscience of ecclesiastics in those days was an artificial, not a natural conscience. When all these points are considered, it must cease to be surprising that so great a battle, so protracted and so destructive, as took place at Hastings, should have led to results so decisive.

Subsequent resistance of the English.

But it would be a great mistake to suppose that the English became at once passive under the yoke imposed on them. Copsi, earl of Northumberland, made his terms with the Conqueror. But his people accounted those terms more selfish than patriotic, and the earl perished as a victim of their resentment.* This happened in the spring of 1067. In the course of the summer there were other signs of inquietude. As the winter came on, the aspect of affairs was so little satisfactory, that William, who was in Normandy, embarked in foul December weather, for the purpose of checking the disorders in his new dominions.

Siege of Exeter.

Exeter was a fortified city, and a place of considerable trade and wealth. Britons and Saxons had long dwelt together within its walls, and leading men of both races were resident in its neighbourhood. The citizens had not opened their gates to a Norman, and

* Guil. Pictav. Ordericus, lib. iv. c. 3.

were not disposed to acknowledge the authority of that race. William approached, demanding the surrender of the place, and that the citizens should take the oath of allegiance. 'We are not prepared to do either,' was the answer, 'we can only promise to pay tribute 'to the king now, as we have paid it in past time.' William replied that he had not been wont to accept of subjects on such terms, and began to make preparations for an assault. At this point some of the more considerable of the inhabitants came out to meet him, and took upon them to negotiate for his admission into the place, giving hostages for the performance of their promise. But, on coming near the city gate, William found that the citizens had loudly denounced the timid policy of those who had presumed to speak for them, and were prepared to resist his entrance. The Conqueror gave orders that the eyes of one of the hostages should be torn out in front of the nearest gate. The deed was done, but the citizens were firm. The place could not be taken by storm; and it was not until the eighteenth day of the siege, when the walls had been undermined, that the inhabitants opened the gates. William, with the uncertainty which attended his distribution of penalties, treated the people leniently.*

Hostile movement of the Saxon nobles.

On his visit to Normandy, in the spring of 1067, the Conqueror took with him the chief Saxon nobles, partly to add splendour to his retinue, and partly to secure them from intriguing against him during his absence. On their return, these persons were filled with indignation as they saw the oppressions to which their countrymen were subject. The earls Edwin, Morcar, and Gospatric, the three youthful sons of the late king Harold, Blithwallon, king of North Wales, and others of less note, began to form plans in the hope of expelling the Normans.† It is true, this con-

* *Chron. Sax.* Ordericus, lib. iv. c. 4. † Ibid.

federacy led to nothing important. But such restlessness on the surface bespeaks a deeper restlessness beneath.

State of the north.

The north of England, from the Humber to the Tyne, was a sea of disaffection. Over that district, the town, the forest, the marsh—every place that could be used as a fortress, was transformed to that purpose. The hardy men who took possession of such places, made so light of their privations, that the Normans spoke of them as savages. But they were led by men who had the noblest Saxon blood in their veins.*

Insurrection at Durham.

In the early part of 1069, the king sent Robert of Comines to administer the law in the county of Durham. Robert, in defiance of the prudent counsel of the bishop, flaunted the Norman banner through the town, and gave such licence to the armed men who attended him, that blood was shed, and more than one ecclesiastic was killed. On the next night, the fire-signal passed from village to village, and by daybreak a multitude of men had covertly flocked together under the walls of the city. The gates were no sooner open, than the crowd from the country rushed in, and joined the townsmen in the cry for vengeance. Robert was called from his bed in the bishop's palace. The Normans used that edifice as a fortress, and defended themselves obstinately. But every man perished, either by the sword, or by the fire which the assailants applied to the building.

Disturbances in the west—invasion of the Danes.

About the same time, Robert Fitz-Richard, another distinguished Norman, was slain, with many of his followers. In Shropshire there was a similar outbreak under Eadric the Forester. In the west, Harold's sons ravaged the coast with armed bands from Ireland, and the insurgent Saxons meditated an attack on Exeter: and, to add to all these sources of inquietude,

* *Chron. Sax.* Odericus, lib. iv. c. 4.

a considerable Danish force came to the assistance of the natives.*

In all these movements there was a want of the largeness and concert necessary to success. Misfortune seemed to attend them. The right thing rarely happened at the right time. But there is enough in them to show, that if England remained the bondsman of the Norman, it was more from the want of men competent to deal with their affairs, than from the want of sound national feeling.*

Want of concert among the English.

William now resolved that these disturbances should, if possible, be brought to an end. His first object was to buy off the leader of the Danes, in which he succeeded. His next step was to reduce the north of England, which had shown so little love to him, and given him so much trouble, to a wilderness. For this purpose he issued orders that all food, and all utensils for the preparation of food, that came in the way of his army, should be destroyed. The famine thus brought on converted many of the wretched people into cannibals, and, according to Norman writers, must have swept away a hundred thousand lives! The armed men were chased into every imaginable retreat, the unarmed everywhere perished from hunger or the sword. The dead lay unburied, and pestilence came in the track of want. Villages and towns disappeared, not to rise again for generations to come. Malmesbury, writing some seventy years later, says, no stranger can pass through the country without lamentation, on seeing magnificent cities, and towers threatening heaven in their loftiness, laid in ruin, and such desolation and barrenness everywhere, that if any old inhabitant remained in the place he knew it no longer.† The land of no man was safe, not even the church lands of Beverley and Durham. Special vengeance fell on the estates of Edwin, Morcar, Wal-

Devastation by the Conqueror in the north.

* Ordericus, lib. iv. c. 4, 5,

† *Hist. Reg.* lib. iii.

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theof, and Mærlesweyne, the only Saxons from whom future opposition might be apprehended.*

William's ultimate policy.

William had become more deeply convinced than ever that the position which he had gained by the sword could be made secure only by such means. His followers did what they could to strengthen that conviction. It favoured their policy, which was to account the rights of the natives as extinct, to garrison the whole country, and to divide it as a spoil between them.

Many of the more warlike among the English now fled westward, and migrated from the ports of Wales to the Continent, with their arms in their hands, soliciting help for their country or offering their services to foreign princes. One body of such men, under the command of Siward, a soldier of reputation in Gloucestershire, extended their travels as far as Sicily, where they were enrolled in the army of the Emperor Alexis, under the name of the *axe-bearers*. It happened, too, that when the Normans, under Robert Guiscard, invaded the neighbouring province of Apulia, these English axe-bearers were the men in the front of the imperial army to meet them. The Englishmen made good use of the occasion. Guiscard was defeated: and the emperor built a town in Ionia for the accommodation of his Anglo-Saxon auxiliaries. Subsequently, Alexis 'recalled them to the imperial 'city, and committed to their charge his principal 'palace, and his royal treasure. In this way the 'Anglo-Saxons settled in Ionia, they and their pos-'terity becoming faithfully attached to the holy em-'pire, and having gained great honour in Thrace, 'continue,' says Ordericus, 'to the present day beloved 'by the emperor, senate, and people.'†

Removal of the Saxon clergy.

On the suppression of the insurrection in the north, William knew that the time had come when it would

* Lib. iv. c. 5.

† Ordericus, lib. iv. c. 3. Fordun, 698. Thierry, ii. 2, 3.

be safe to act more in accordance with the wishes of his adherents, if not with his own, and he did so. We have seen something of the freedom with which the property of the country was seized and distributed. But the English people were not only impoverished, they were excluded from all offices, except the lowest, both in church and state. William alleged that they were not to be trusted. He had tried them, and found them faithless. He was not likely to see that the blame in this matter rested more with himself than with the objects of his censure. It is hard to confide in the unprincipled—harder still to confide in the injured. Certainly the king could not say that the Saxon clergy had betrayed him. If fault attached to them, it had been on the side of a too ready submission to his will. But their subservience did not suffice to protect them against his rapacity and injustice. He robbed their churches without scruple. He removed their dignitaries simply at his pleasure. Pretexts were soon found for deposing Stigand from the see of Canterbury, and his treasures were divided between the queen, the king, and his brother, bishop Odo, an ecclesiastic then doing military service at Dover. The bishops of Wells and Sherborne were Frenchmen, and were allowed to retain their prelacies. Alexander, bishop of Lincoln; Egalmar, bishop of East Anglia; and Egelric, bishop of Sussex, were all Saxons, and all were deprived of their office and possessions without even the pretence of their having done anything to warrant such a proceeding. Egelwin, bishop of Durham, shared the same fate, and his last act before going into exile, was to pronounce sentence of excommunication against the men who were daily plundering the church and oppressing the people.* Eldred, the archbishop of York, did not long survive the ceremony of crowning the new king, and his successor was of course a

* Matt. West. an. 1070. Wendover, ad an.

Norman. A man named Remi, of Féchamp, had furnished the Conqueror with sixty boats, and in payment for this service he was first presented to the see of Dorchester, and afterwards to that of Lincoln.

This last instance of promotion is only a sample of the kind of traffic which obtained everywhere in this subjugated country. For William had gathered about him, not only a host of nobles and knights, with their retainers, but a large body of ecclesiastical adventurers, who had learnt to look on any contribution towards the expedition against England as a good investment. The necessity of providing for these priestly cormorants was hardly less imperative than the need of providing for the military class.

Anglo-Norman clergy.

The instance of royal patronage in the Anglo-Norman church least open to exception, was the promotion of Lanfranc to the see of Canterbury. Lanfranc made some good appointments, and some that were very bad — the latter being made probably under bad influence. The Anglo-Saxon clergy at that time were not men of much culture. But there was not a body of men of more piety, or of more intelligence, in any Teutonic nation of that age. Slight as their learning may seem to have been, it was much greater than was possessed by such of the Norman clergy before the Conquest as can be shown to have been natives of Normandy. The pretence, accordingly, that the Anglo-Saxon clergy were removed as incompetent, is manifestly false. The plea that they were wanting in piety, as coming from such a quarter, was a piece of sheer hypocrisy. The martial prelates who came in with the Conquest, were gazed upon with wonder by the Anglo-Saxon priesthood, and were a sore offence to their simple faith. Their eyes had never seen the like before. To draw a sword in the presence of an Anglo-Saxon bishop was to incur a fine as heavy as if it had been drawn in the presence of a king. By the new clergy, the monks were generally

expelled from their ancient homes near the cathedrals. Robert of Limoges, who became bishop of Lincoln, doomed the monks of Coventry to the poorest fare, lest the good condition of their flesh should prompt them to insubordination. The books also, to be accessible to them, were to be few in number, and such as were not likely to give them high notions. To test the humility of this ill-fated fraternity, the bishop seized their horses, robbed them of their furniture, and forcing his way into their dormitory, broke open their coffers, and carried away all he found there.* The lust of the bishop of Hereford cost him his life. He fell by the hand of a woman to whom he would have done violence.† While some became thus notoriously impure, others became as notoriously gluttonous. In short, covetousness and sensuality are said to have been in greater excess among the foreign ecclesiastics, than among the foreign soldiers. Of course, as we have intimated, there were exceptions to this course of things, but such was the general complexion of the change now introduced.‡

Under William Rufus, everything in the church became only more and more venal. Henry the First placed a considerable check on these abuses; but during the reign of Stephen, the confusion and lawlessness which prevailed, were such as the country had not witnessed since the darkest times in the history of the Danish invasions.

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* *Anglia Sacra*, 455. Lanfranci *Opera*, 31. Knyghton, 2352.

† Knyghton, 2348.

‡ Wendover, A.D. 1087. Treheric, the abbot of St. Albans, chose to retire with his monks from that place, rather than continue on the conditions imposed by the Conqueror. Lanfranc gave the abbey, as a matter of course, to a Frenchman. But the man was of low origin and mean attainments, and the monks introduced by him, who were mostly his relations, were not only grossly ignorant, but addicted to vices said to be too infamous to be described.—*Matt. Paris, Vitæ Abbat.* 51. At Christmas, says an old historian, William kept his court at Gloucester, and gave bishoprics to his three chaplains—London to Maurice, Norwich to William, and Chester to Robert.

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Agricultural population.

It is not easy to discover the real condition of the labouring class in the country, or of the artisan class in the towns, during this period. Information becomes more available on this subject as we descend to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. But there is no room to doubt that in this earlier time the agricultural labour of the country was performed largely by men in the condition of serfs or slaves; while those who possessed lands as tenants, were generally bound to render services, not unfrequently of a menial description, to their landlords, either in person or by substitute.

Serfs.

The condition common to the serf population was, that they could acquire no right to property, and that they might be sold with the land, or separated from it, according to the will of their owners. Persons of this class were sometimes employed in domestic service, and were sometimes allowed to cultivate a few acres of ground for themselves. But these circumstances did not affect their condition as slaves. Before the Conquest, slaves consisted of persons born as slaves, or who had been made such from being captives taken in war. Often the chief, or the only, spoil to be realized in such enterprises, was of this nature. So English slaves became common in the families of Scotland, and Scotch slaves in the families in England. So it was along the Welsh border. But the Conquest, by putting an end comparatively to those border wars, diminished the supply of slaves. We have no reason to think that any Englishman became a slave in England after the Conquest otherwise than by birth, or by his own act. Hard, no doubt, was the condition of this class of persons. But in those days there was no poor-law. Every holder of slaves was accounted responsible for their conduct, and for his own care of them. His own interest would dispose him to regulate their employment, and to house, and clothe, and feed them, so as to be able to use them as healthy instruments of labour. Not a few of them were better provided for than they would have been had they been left to them-

selves; though the little we know concerning the dwellings, the furniture, and the clothing of the population a degree above the serf, suggests no pleasant conclusion in regard to the comforts in these respects of the humbler classes generally. Some lords, and still more those who acted for them, would often, we fear, be hard masters; but there would be many checks upon such tendencies, and not the least was the constant protest against them on the part of the monasteries, in their frequent manumission, and generally humane treatment, of their bondsmen.

Free tenants.

In the twelfth century there was a great increase of the free tenants—men who sowed for their lord in the sowing season, and reaped for him in the reaping season, either in person or by deputy, but whose services of this kind were defined and settled, and who were otherwise free. The extensive lands of Battle Abbey were generally held on this tenure. Townsmen and countrymen stood in a relation of this sort to that establishment. In all accounts of English property, from the twelfth century downwards, there is a careful mention of the number of persons of this description connected with it. Fish, bread, and beer are mentioned as allowed to the serf. He might also taste his lord's mutton, but it was only on certain days.*

While the mass of the population settled gradually into a life of this description, there were those who could not submit to it. Men of courage, skilled in the use of arms, fled to the fens and forests, formed themselves into companies, and were bold and ingenious in levying contributions on the Norman, as the Norman had levied them on the Saxon. By these outlaws, who beset all the public ways, the invaders were often relieved of their ill-gotten treasures, and their bodies left to be buried by such of their own

* *Chronicle of Battle Abbey.* The name of 'villein' was applied to those whom we have thus ventured to describe as free tenants: their condition was at a wide remove from that of the serf. Eden's *State of the Poor*, bk. i. c. 1.

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race as had survived them. So long as hostilities could be sustained even on this scale, there were men who could dream of better days.

The confederation at Ely.

The great gathering place to spirits of this order was the Isle of Ely. To the marsh and reed lands of that part of the kingdom, many of the fugitive Saxons fled, as affording them their best means of safety. What the mountains were to the Welsh, these fen lands were to the Saxons of East Anglia, and of some other districts. The Isle of Ely, in consequence, became known among the natives by the name of the Camp of Refuge. Among those who fled thither there were some men of the highest rank—such as Stigand, the late archbishop of Canterbury; Egelwin, the late bishop of Durham; and the earls Edwin and Morcar. The bishops returned thither from their exile in Scotland; and the earls, escaping from their durance at court, sought an asylum in that quarter, in the hope that the Saxon arm might still prove strong enough for its own deliverance.*

Fate of the Algars.

But in Ely Morcar listened a third time to the crafty overtures of William. He had scarcely left the island, when the snare into which he had fallen became manifest. He was seized and placed in irons. It was the lot of Morcar to look through the gratings of his Norman prison long enough to see a generation pass away.† Edwin, whose affection for his brother was ardent, perished in his attempt to avenge and liberate him. Two traitors conspired to betray him. He died defending himself with much heroism against great odds. His head was sent as a trophy to the king. Lucy, a sister of the earls, survived them. Her fate may be taken as an instance of that which awaited not a few Saxon women in her circumstances. She was compelled to marry one of the race who had be-

* *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 1071. *Anglia Sacra;* ii. 610. Wendover, A.D. 1070.

† *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 1087.

come known to her only as the plunderers and murderers of her nearest kindred.*

Ives Taille-bois, to whom this lady was assigned, fixed his residence on a portion of the ample domains which thus fell to him near Ely. The accounts given of this man depict him as coarse, brutal, fiendish—oppressing, torturing, and destroying the people about him, and often without any apparent cause beyond the pleasure which he seemed to find in such employment. Such was the husband given to the daughter of the once powerful earl Alfgar. Not far from Taille-bois's residence was a colony of Saxon monks, from the neighbouring abbey of Croyland. His conduct towards those defenceless men was atrocious. Everything they could do to appease his monster passions was done, but in vain. At length they left the place, shaking off the dust of their feet against their oppressor.† Taille-bois took possession of the building, and of the lands belonging to it, and gave them to a company of monks whom he imported from his native town in Anjou. The abbot of Croyland laid this whole case before the king and his council. But the expelled monks were Saxons, the abbot chanced to be a Saxon, and the suit was disregarded.‡

Hereward the outlaw.

It was in those fen countries that Hereward, the most famous among the earlier Saxon outlaws, distinguished himself. Hereward was the son of Leofric, lord of Bourne in Lincolnshire. He had been disinherited by the Normans. But he was not disposed to submit to the spoliation. Calling his kinsmen and friends together, he dislodged the new occupants of his lands, and defended them bravely against the 'castle-men' in his neighbourhood. The natives ap-

* Ordericus, lib. iv. c. 4, 7. The king affected great sorrow when the head of earl Edwin was brought to him. He gave command on his death-bed for the liberation of Morcar, but Rufus did not heed the injunction.—*Chron. Sax.* A.D. 1087. *Monast. Anglic.* i. 306.

† Wendover, A.D. 1070.

‡ Ingulph. *Hist. Croy.* 902. Wendover, A.D. 1085.

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plauded his achievements, sang ballads in his praise, often in the ears of the Normans, who spoke French, but knew little of English.

Not far from the lands of Hereward was the abbey of Croyland, and the Isles of Ely and Thorney—the seat of the Camp of Refuge. The fugitives in that camp invited Hereward to become their leader. For this purpose he was invested with due military rank, according to the forms of that age. It was at this juncture that a Norman abbot, named Torauld, was sent to take charge of the abbey of Peterborough. This ecclesiastic began his journey towards Peterborough under a strong military escort. But Hereward and his followers visited the monastery before him; and finding that the monks were not likely to resist their new superior, the outlaw seized all the valuables that could be discovered, and bore them to his camp.*

Taille-bois, now Viscount Spalding, invited Torauld to join him in an expedition against Hereward. The timid policy of the abbot and his men-at-arms ended in their being surprised and taken prisoners. The ransom of the ecclesiastic came as a welcome contribution to the exchequer of the camp. The Normans now made a grand effort against the fastness of the Saxons in Ely. A pathway—half bridge half road—was constructed over marsh, and reeds, and lake, so as to reach the shore of the island. Taille-bois, who, like all men of his sort, had more faith in a devil than in a divinity, bid a famous witch ascend a tower raised by his workmen, and hurl her incantations thence against the Saxons. Hereward, little moved by such terrors, set fire to the reeds and dry materials of the place, which brought destruction on the sorceress, and on many of the Normans as they were advancing to the attack under her protection. After months of re-

* *Chron. Sax.* A.D. 1070. Wendover. Ingulph. 899 et seq. *Chronicon Angliæ Petriburgense.*

sistance—resistance fertile in stratagem and in displays of bravery—certain monks, weary of their state of inquietude and privation, apprised the Normans of a secret path to their retreat. By the treachery of those men of peace a thousand Saxon lives were sacrificed. But Hereward escaped, and lived to gladden the heart of many a Saxon by his successes.*

Death of Waltheof, the last Saxon noble.

The destruction or dispersion of the men who formed the Camp of Refuge belongs to the year 1071. One Saxon layman only then remained as a man of place and power. This man was the earl Waltheof. Waltheof had made his peace with the king, and William had given this chief his niece Judith in marriage. In 1074, Robert, earl of Hereford, and other discontented Normans, conspired against William, during his occupation with an unsettled state of his affairs in Normandy. The secret was disclosed to Waltheof, in the hope of securing his adherence. Waltheof declined being a party to the plot, but promised not to betray the confidence which had been reposed in him by divulging it. He was afterwards accused of having been privy to these proceedings, and of having invited the Danes to aid the conspirators. The latter point in this charge was probably ill-founded. In the failure of all other evidence, his Norman wife became his accuser. He was condemned, and the parties who were coveting his large estates became possessed of them. But during twelve months his judges were divided concerning the sentence that should be pronounced upon him—whether the loss of his head, as proper to a mere Saxon rebel, or imprisonment only, the heaviest punishment that could be inflicted on a Norman noble. In the end, the iniquitous

* Wendover says that 'Hereward, so long as he lived, practised all sorts of stratagems against king William.'—A.D. 1071. The same writer adds, that the construction in the marshes 'is called by the people of the province to this day, Hereward's fort.' The *Saxon Chronicle* describes the bridge constructed by the king to reach the Isle of Ely as two miles in length.—A.D 1071. *Contin. Ingulf*, 125.

decision was, that the rank which would have served him as a Norman should not serve him as an Englishman. He was beheaded, in a suburb of Winchester, early in the morning, and almost secretly, for fear of the people. The Saxons mourned him as a patriot and a saint. His body was first laid beneath a cross-road. It was afterwards interred at Croyland. During many generations the English made pilgrimage to his tomb, and were persuaded that miracles had been wrought there. The Norman ecclesiastics often sneered at these devotions of the people, and derided them as an imbecile attempt to convert a traitor into a martyr.*

It is probable that there was a time when William meant to have spared the life of Waltheof. But his conduct toward the Saxon nobles generally, seems to have been intended to secure to himself the advantage of an apparent moderation, while in reality the doom awaiting his victims was only postponed. There were many things in respect to which this bad man had learnt to account slowness as sureness.

Condition of Saxon women.

William attempted to dispose of Judith a second time in marriage; but the man was lame, and she resisted the choice. Whereupon, she was stripped of her possessions, and in the poverty and neglect to which she was reduced, the Saxons saw the just punishment of her evil deed. This arbitrary disposal of women was a Norman custom—to English females of the better class it was the source of incalculable suffering. The stipulations of the Norman adventurers had respect to women as well as to estates.

Last form of Saxon resistance.

When the last Saxon chief was disposed of at Winchester, the Normans had little to fear from the natives in the open field.† Mention is made, indeed, some sixty years later, of a conspiracy to massacre the Nor-

* Ordericus, lib. iv. c. 7, 14, 15. Malms. lib. iii. Wendover, A.D. 1075. Ingulf, *Croy.* 903. Fordun, iii. 510.

† Ordericus, lib. iv. c. 3, 4.

mans throughout all England on a given day and hour. The secret is said to have transpired, as usual, through the confessional. Many perished, but the leaders escaped. It may be that there was a Saxon conspiracy in 1127, but it appears to have been greatly magnified by the fears, or more probably by the policy, of the Normans.* The *Saxon Chronicle*, William of Malmesbury, and other writers, who were most likely to have recorded such an event, are silent concerning it. If there was anything approaching to a wide organization against the invaders at that time, it is to be marked as the only movement of that nature after the dispersion of the camp at Ely. Subsequently to that dispersion, the only form in which the Normans might apprehend danger, was when travelling alone, or in small companies, especially in the north of England. When their path chanced to lie through the forest, along the unfrequented road, or across the marsh or the mountain, it became them to be watchful. William had converted Yorkshire into a desert; but in so doing he had done less to awaken loyalty, than to create a home for the outlaw. During two centuries from that time, no Norman king ventured into those parts without the safeguard of an army.

Change in the feeling of the English in regard to law and government.

It was the natural effect of the Conquest, that men should learn to see the spirit of the patriot in the deeds of such men. Life spent in watching to seize the persons and the substance of the castle-men as a prey, came to be regarded as brave and virtuous. The orders of the government were, that such bands should be hunted down as wolves. But multitudes who were themselves submissive, applauded in their heart the men who were bold enough to defy the oppressor. The law might denounce such men as robbers, murderers, and traitors, but it availed nothing—the people did not speak of them in such terms. No ballads were so popular as those which described the feats of

* Ordericus, 912. Thierry, bk. vii.

forest-men in capturing portly abbots and wealthy prelates, bold knights and proud nobles, and as replenishing their coffers by the ransom. In the popular feeling, high honour was awarded to the adventurous spirits who shared among them the spoils of the neighbouring baron without the leave of his retainers, or fed on the king's venison in defiance of the king's laws. Rich was the glee with which they told of the merry freebooter, how he eluded the horsemen of the sheriff, wormed out his secret when most vain of his skill in concealing it, and caught him when least suspicious in his own snare. So it came to pass that men were accounted the purest lovers of their country who were the boldest in resisting its authorities. When injustice comes into the place of justice, it is natural that the sense of duty should thus change. The first Norman king, as we all know, cleared the soil of Hampshire of its inhabitants over a space of thirty miles, to create his great deer forest; and if he did not punish a violation of his forest laws with death, it was from no feeling of humanity, but because he accounted the loss of eyes or limbs a more protracted, admonitory, and terrible punishment than hanging. The wild king, says the old chronicler, loved wild beasts as though he had been the father of them.*

The successors of Hereward in East Anglia and beyond the Humber, were never men in a condition to be allowed to hope that it would ever be in their power to oppose any really formidable resistance to the rule of the Norman. They were simply men, for the most part, whom lawlessness had forced into lawlessness. But considerable bands of such men kept their footing in those districts for many generations. To rob the Normans was to spoil the Egyptians, nothing more.†

* Wendov. ad an. 1086.

† The forests in the province of York were the haunt of a nume-

Cumberland outlaws.

Nor were the western sides of the Yorkshire hills without the signs of such popular feeling any more than the eastern. Ballads have perpetuated the memory of Adam Bel, of Clym of the Clough (Clement of the Valley), and of William Cloudesley, as men who in those parts became heroes, in the popular estimation, by becoming outlaws. These men were all natives of Cumberland. They had offended against the Norman chase laws. By so doing they had forfeited the protection of all law. Sharing in common in this alleged crime, and in its consequences, they bound themselves to be one in all things. Thus solemnly pledged, they betook them to the forest of Inglewood, or English-wood, which lay between Penrith and Carlisle. They baffled their persecutors, and made themselves formidable. In the view of the people, they were bold and generous men, prepared to brave all things, so they might be free, leaving it to others to brave nothing, and to be slaves.

Cloudesley had a wife and children in Carlisle. Bel and Clym had no such ties. After long absence, the married man spoke of longing for one more sight of those dear to him. His companions warned him of danger, but without effect. Cloudesley finds his way into the city by night. An old woman, whom he had befriended in former days, detects him, and gives information against him. The outlaw, to the no small joy of the authorities, is torn from the arms of his wife and children, and a new gallows is forthwith reared in the market-place for his execution. But a swineherd boy, who had often seen the doomed man in Inglewood forest, and received kindness from

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rous band of this description, who had for their chief, or *prince* (as the original history expresses it), a man named Swan. In the central parts of the kingdom also, and near London, even under the walls of the Norman castles, various bodies of such men existed. They consisted (say the old writers) of men who, rejecting slavery to the last, made the desert their asylum.—Thierry, bk. v. *Hist. Monas. Selebiensis apud Biblioth. Labbæi.* 603.

him, learns what is passing, and hastens to apprise Bel and Clym of what is about to happen. The two resolve that Cloudesley shall be saved, or the three will die together. They despatch the porter at the town gate, and by stratagem and courage, they so fall upon the authorities at the place of execution, as to rescue their brother, killing the judge, the sheriff, and many more. The poet recounts these death-blows in a spirit which shows that the people were expected to shout applause as they listened to the tale.*

Robin Hood.

But the man who became the representative of this English feeling beyond all other men in those times, was the famous Robin Hood. The history of this popular hero belongs to the close of the twelfth century. Even in Yorkshire, we find some traces of him, in the places which bear the name of Robin Hood's bay, and Robin Hood's well. But the forest of Sherwood, or *sire-wode*, which was his home, stretched in those days from the centre of Yorkshire to the town of Nottingham. Through more than a century, Sherwood forest was the great castle of the Saxon. There, at least, the Normans could be defied, and kept at bay. It is with that portion of this fastness which covered a large part of the midland counties, that the exploits of Robin Hood are mostly associated.

Discarding many contradictory accounts relating to his supposed origin and end, it is not to be doubted that this outlaw king attracted to himself some hundreds of armed men, whose bows and swords made them the terror of all Norman officials in their neighbourhood, whether in church or state; that the industrious, the widow, and the poor had never anything to fear from the approach of Robin or his men; that his heart was the stoutest heart of all his band, as his bow was the strongest and the truest bow; that next to him came his man Little John, who is always at his side, be the face of fortune what it may; that

* *Percy Relics*, iii. Jamieson's *Ancient Popular Songs*.

with these two, honourable place was given to Mutch, the miller's son, to old Scathlocke, and to the militant Friar Tuck, with his terrible quarter-staff; that these merry woodsmen never killed, except in self-defence; and that nothing was farther from their thoughts than making themselves rich—their one concern being to rectify some bad differences which had grown up of late, by taking from the oppressor and giving to the oppressed, and by moderating the excesses of the proud and the wealthy, in favour of the humble and the poor. Hence this robber king was, in his way, very religious—a Saturday spent in seizures on the highway, being followed by a Sunday spent with scrupulous devoutness at church. Robin's hostilities were especially directed against the sheriff, or count, of Nottingham, in whom the military power of the district was vested. All possible means were resorted to for the apprehension of this man. Many were his perils, but many were his escapes and deliverances. In all his dangers warm hearts sympathized with him, and did what they could to serve him—in all his successes they shouted for joy.*

His memory grateful to the English.

When the day of Robin Hood had passed, the people instituted seasons of holiday to his memory. For centuries, no occasion of popular pageantry and festival was so full of mirth, as that which commemorated the forest king, and the merry men who did his free and righteous bidding. The many associations of 'Foresters' still existing among us, owe their origin to that inextinguishable feeling of Saxon nationality which prevailed thus under our earlier Norman kings. Even so late as the time of Chaucer, we find the story of Gamelyn, the 'Cook's Tale,' breathing the Robin Hood spirit throughout. Its great feature is contempt of the law, and war with those who uphold and administer it; and the reader

* Jamieson's *Popular Songs*, ii. Percy's *Relics of Ancient Poetry*. Ellis's *Metrical Romances*.

is expected to applaud the hero when he hangs the judge in the place of the alleged culprit. The ruling class is accounted alien, and right and humanity are supposed to be on the side of resistance. Even in the days of Henry VI. the name of the great 'north country' man, Redesdale, is connected with the traces of this old English anti-Norman spirit, as still living beyond the Humber.

Retrospect.

We see, then, that the effect of the Norman Conquest in relation to the English people was to deprive them of property and place—of possessions and of political existence. But the wrong and insult heaped upon them did not convert them all into willing slaves. Cast down, they were not destroyed. Nor was their spirit broken. We see this in part in the defiance of wrong by individual men, and by small bands of men, but much more in that wide and fervent sympathy which the career of such men is seen to call forth. That there were men in those days disposed to resort to such modes of life, is not a fact of much historical significance—but that the character of the men in this case should be such as it is, and that the whole Saxon population should have become so outspoken in its admiration of them, these are facts which the historian who would write an intelligible history of England must not overlook. The Anglo-Saxons, rude and warlike as they may have been, had much to do, or supposed they had, both with the making and with the administration of their laws, and were always distinguished by their respect for law. It is not until the Norman lawlessness comes in, that some of them are content to become outlaws, and that the popular feeling comes to be everywhere in favour of such men.

How this feeling came to make its way, ere long, from the lower stratum of society to the higher, will be matter for inquiry elsewhere. In this place, the reader has to look on the country we call England as the home of two races, distinct from each other, and antagonistic to each other. The Normans consist of

nobles and knights, with followers and fair dames. They have their homes in castles fenced about with moats and bridges. The battlements and turrets of those structures, and the proud standards which float above them, are seen rising over the forest trees in the distant valley, or along the mountain side. Within those frowning walls, such brilliancy as the wealth of those days could command gradually makes its appearance—decorated halls, gay minstrels, the banquet and the tournament. The language spoken is French, the taste and manners are French, the whole pageant is from another land—it is not the birth of this land. Its outward form, its inner life, are foreign. To find the old language, the old blood, the old thought and feeling and usage of the land, you have to leave the Norman castle, and to descend to the town dwelling, or to the country homestead of the Saxon. Some few of those homes, in borough, town, or upland district, may bespeak moderate comfort, and may seem to say that there will be wealth there some day. More are of a humbler sort, where all within is only too much like what is seen without. But at those firesides the talk is often of the days when the speech of the Saxon was that of the hall of the noble, and of the palace of the king—of the time when the men who governed Englishmen were of their own true kindred, and when their common blood did much to dictate kindly offices between the ruling and the ruled. Every new injury brings back the memory or the tradition of those old days, and prompts the oppressed to heap his malediction on the iron cruelty of the oppressor, or, it may be, to think of the brave Alfred, and of the good king Edward, and to pray for deliverance. Nor did such men pray in vain.

Rise of towns.

How soon our Anglo-Norman kings began to strengthen their position by granting special charters to English towns, is a somewhat obscure question. The kings of France and of Scotland began to act on this policy early in the eleventh century; and when

Glanvil wrote, which was under Henry II., the liberties of the free boroughs in England were such, that if a bondsman sought a home in one of them, and continued unclaimed for a day and a year, he became free. In the Anglo-Saxon times, the business of the tradesman and merchant was subject to many vexatious regulations. The freedom of the free boroughs after the Conquest, consisted in liberty to buy and sell free from such impediments; in the exemption of traders as such from certain tolls and exactions; in the right of the townspeople to choose their own officers, to regulate their own local affairs, and to possess their own keys; and in the subjection of the place to the crown, to the exclusion of all interference from the feudal lords of the district. In the transactions between the barons and prelates, and John, earl of Moreton, afterwards king John, on the one side, and the citizens of London on the other side, relating to the deposition of Hubert the Justiciar, the negotiations are clearly as between two distinct and independent powers, and the course to be taken is upon grounds mutually determined. Towards such a course the affairs of towns had long been tending through the kingdom at large. In the leading towns, the different trades and 'mysteries' were formed into guilds, which were all of them the objects of special protection and privilege. The revenue and the power of our kings were greatly augmented from these sources. Among the commodities fairly purchased by these ancient burgesses were their liberties—a commodity not to be taken from them.*

* Brady *On Boroughs. Rolls and Records,* Introd. § xxxi. The municipal history of France, and of the south of Europe, differs considerably from our own. In those countries the old Roman cities were more or less perpetuated through all the changes which came with the fall of the empire. It was not so with us. See Thierry's *Tiers Etat* and his *Essays.*

Lord Macaulay's brilliant eulogy on the character of the Normans is an extraordinary piece of composition in more respects than one. In regard to military discipline and efficiency, and the qualities which that efficiency may be supposed to imply, the Normans were, at the time of the Conquest, very much as his lordship has described them. But, among the many other points embraced in his lordship's description, there is hardly one to which strong exception may not be taken. It is, in fact, a description, for the most part, that does not apply to the Normans in Normandy at all, nor to the Normans in England until we descend to the third or fourth generation after the Conquest, and only partially even then. How the Normans came to be the men they were when they had been thus long naturalized in England, and not before, is a question of some interest, and not to be readily answered.

Describing the Normans before the Conquest, Lord Macaulay says, they found the language of Normandy 'a barbarous jargon; they fixed it in writing; and they employed it in legislation, in poetry, and romance.' (*Hist.* i. p. 11.) It is a fact, however, that we have no collection of laws, no national historic work, no poem, no essays, not even a volume of sermons, by any native of Normandy from the time before the Conquest, to lend support to this representation. (Lappenberg, *England under the Normans.* William I.) The few names of cultivated men which belong to the history of Normandy in the latter half of the eleventh century, are the names of Italians or Frenchmen, they are not the names of Normans. Our earliest written authority in relation to the laws of Normandy, does not go further back than the time of Henry II. (*Coutumier of Normandy*); and the compiler of that work thinks it probable that, in the history of jurisprudence to that time, the influence of Normandy on England had been less, than the influence of England on Normandy. Judge Hale is strongly of this opinion (*Hist. Com. Law*, cc. vi. vii.), and the opinion becomes highly probable, from the much older civilization, and the greater wealth, of the conquered country. The literature of 'romance,' in the history of the Normans, of which we have any knowledge, is not older than the latter half of the twelfth century, and was not only the work of Normans in England long after the Conquest, but consists of little else than a metrical rendering from English tales and ballads, or from the Latin prose of our own Geoffrey of Monmouth. The earliest known use of Norman-French in authorship does not occur until at least half a century after the settlement of the Normans in this country, and of that instance we have only the tradition, the work itself does not exist.—Ellis's *Metrical Romances*, Introd. § 1.

Lord Macaulay further states, that such was the contempt with which the English were regarded by the Normans, that when Henry I. hoped to gain the affection of the natives by marrying an English princess, the marriage was regarded by 'many of the barons as a marriage between a white planter and a quadroon girl would now be regarded in Virginia' (i. 14). Is it not strange, then, that the Norman writers should tell us that William himself, the master of all those barons, betrothed one of his daughters to that quadroon Harold, son of earl Godwin, another to that

quadroon Edwin, son of earl Alfgar, and that he gave his niece Judith in marriage to that quadroon Waltheof, son of earl Siward. Did the taint run in the blood of the one sex and not in the other? It would hardly seem to be so, for a sister of this quadroon princess became the wife of one of these haughty barons; and marriages between the two races were only too common for the happiness of Anglo-Saxon females of good family whose lot was cast in those evil times. In more than one instance, a Norman princess was not thought to be degraded by being given in marriage even to a Welshman.—Ellis's *Metric. Rom.* Introd. § 3.

That the Norman barons were often disposed to indulge in a tone of military insolence towards the English, and that there were men in the herd of adventurers who followed them, ready to copy their example in this particular, may be true enough. But it does not follow from such facts that the Anglo-Saxons, while inferior to their oppressors in military skill, were not their superiors in much beside. The Normans, we have reason to believe, retained much of the hard physiognomy which they had derived from their coarse Norwegian stock; and much in their manners which had come from the same source; while the better class of Anglo-Saxons, of both sexes, are known to have been remarkable for their personal beauty, and also, it would seem, for a mildness, and a comparative refinement of manner, of which we trace small evidence among the invaders who fought at Hastings. In legislation, in the useful arts, in the arts which contribute to the embellishment of life, in learning, and in morals and piety, the Anglo-Saxons had made no mean progress while the Normans were still mere freebooters, and a progress which the Normans of the eleventh century had but very partially reached. 'William,' says an authority before cited, 'celebrated the Easter festival (March, 1067) at Fécamp, whither many French princes and nobles were attracted, in honour of their former equal, now by craft and the fortune of war exalted high above them. Great was the wonder manifested by all on beholding the young Anglo-Saxons, with their long flowing locks, whose almost feminine beauty excited the envy of the comeliest among the youth of France. Nor was their admiration less on seeing the garments of the king and his attendants, interwoven and encrusted with gold, causing all they had previously seen to appear as mean; also the almost numberless vessels of gold and silver of surpassing elegance: for in such cups only, or in horns of oxen, decorated at both extremities with the same metals, the numerous guests were served with drink. Overwhelmed with the sight of so much magnificence, the French returned home.'—Lappenberg's *William I.* William of Poitiers, secretary to the Conqueror, from whom the above description is taken, has added, 'the English women are eminently skilful with their needle, and in the weaving of gold; the men in every kind of artificial workmanship' (p. 210). The Normans who invaded England were at the head of the military science of their age; in scarcely anything else can they be said to have been in advance of the English, in many things they were not on a level with them. Their valour stood them in good stead in Normandy, their learning and refinement are almost wholly of a date subsequent to their settlement in England, and the higher education which awaited in England made them Englishmen.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONQUEST IN ITS RELATION TO GOVERNMENT.

Design of this chapter.

THE interval during which the great feature in English history consists in the ascendency of the Normans and the subjection of the Saxons, extends from the Conquest to the age of the Great Charter. The reigns included in this interval are those of the Conqueror, William Rufus, Henry I., and Stephen; also those of Henry II., and of his sons Richard and John. These reigns together cover a century and a half. The changes in respect to government introduced immediately after the Conquest, and the gradual development of the new political feeling, and of the new principles of government, which ended in the great settlement at Runnymeade, constitute the subject to be treated in this chapter.

Distinction between common and statute law.

Lawyers are accustomed to divide law into two departments—the *not written*, and the *written*. What is called *common* law, embraces all unwritten law, and much that has been written. Immemorial usage possesses the authority of law; and law may be proved to be such by writings, as well as by other evidence, without becoming in the legal sense statute or written law. So little care had been taken to preserve the laws which had been committed to writing before the accession of Richard I., that, in the legal sense, all law before that time is accounted as unwritten, and as being law only from old usage. Statute law rests on the statutes recorded and preserved from that time. All that is antecedent is common law.

The common law of England at the time of the Conquest, was partly written and partly not written. The not written consisted in those old customs which

had survived all record or compact relating to them. The written consisted in those written laws of the different Anglo-Saxon states which had been more or less collected and digested by Alfred, and Edgar, and the Confessor. In this mixture of custom and record we find the common law—the law of the land to Englishmen, at the time of the Conquest; and these are the laws intended by the English when they pray so earnestly that they may still be governed as in the days of the good king Edward. We have seen what these laws were. We have now to see how far they were perpetuated.*

Feudalism in England.

The military organizations extended by the Normans over the country they had conquered, was the first great feature of change. The great men became tenants to the crown. Lesser men became tenants to the greater. The demand made on every tenant by his landlord, whether in the person of the king or the baron, was a certain amount of military assistance, or else a rent to be paid in the shape of produce or personal service. The first form of tenure, as mentioned elsewhere, was designated military tenure. The second was known by the name of soccage.

Feudal incidents.

These feudal tenures brought with them feudal burdens which were occasional, in addition to those which were regular. On succeeding to an inheritance, a considerable fine was paid to the king, under the name of the *relief*. On such occasions the contributions of those who held by military tenure consisted of horses and warlike accoutrements. The soccage tenant forfeited a year's rent; the villein his best beast. Similar exactions were made, under the name of *aids*, when the king knighted his eldest son, or gave his daughter in marriage. It was provided also, that the property of state offenders should *escheat* to the crown, and that the same should follow on the failure of

* Hale's *History of the Common Law*. Blackstone's *Commentaries*, Introd. § 3.

heirs. Trial by *duel* was hardly known among the Anglo-Saxons. It became very common among the Anglo-Normans. With these novelties came a stricter enforcement of the laws of primogeniture, and a series of laws limiting the right of the parent to alienate his property, especially his inherited property. But no feature of the new legislation was so repugnant to the feeling of the English as the forest laws. The chasing away of people by thousands from the soil, that their homes might be converted into forests for wild animals, was evil enough; but the punishments which followed the violation of those laws filled the cup of the popular indignation to the full. It is true the Conqueror was opposed to capital punishments, but it was, as we have said, simply because his merciless nature regarded mutilation as likely to prove a greater terror than the gallows.*

Great meeting at Salisbury.

In a great meeting convened at Salisbury in 1086, William required that all subtenants, no less than his great tenants, should be accounted as holding their lands from the crown. According to the *Saxon Chronicle*, this meeting embraced 'all the tenants of 'the land that were of consequence over all England.' Another contemporary authority says, the persons assembled were not less than 60,000—all, as the Saxon annalist writes, 'becoming the vassals of this man.'†

Its effects.

This fact shows, beyond doubt, the great power retained by the Conqueror to the last year of his life. The tendency of this proceeding was to detract somewhat from the independence of the nobles, by diffusing a spirit of divided allegiance through all the subvassals of the king. Its effect, however, was not so much to augment the power of the crown, as to open the way to a gradual elevation of the people. For the right of direct interference on the part of the crown, in all the relations between landlord and

* Blackstone, iv. bk. iv. c. 33. Reeves's *Hist. Eng. Law*, i. c. 2.

† *Chron. Sax.* ad an. 1086. Ordericus. Madox, *Hist. Exchcq.* c. i.

tenant, which was thus established, extended to county and borough; and in the contentions which frequently arose from this source between the king and his nobles, the people were generally the gainers. Two masters thus came into the field, and each often claimed allegiance on the ground of being the best. To the class of landholders whom we now designate the gentry, this arrangement was often advantageous. It gave them a right of appeal from local oppression, of which it would be in their power to avail themselves.

Rule of the Conqueror.

The temper and the circumstances of the Conqueror gave their impress to his policy. His distrust of the English was the natural result of the course which he had taken towards them. He did enough to make confidence in him impossible, and then affected to complain of the want of confidence. It was not in his nature to choose a mild course for its own sake. His avarice and his ambition prompted him to rule with a strong hand. To gratify these passions he could descend to almost any depth in craft or crime. From these causes he has his place in the class of rulers whom history must describe as tyrannical, severe, cruel. His strength never came from the affection of those beneath him, but from a stern mastery over their interests and their fears. When he promised at his coronation to rule the people of England as the best of their kings had ruled them, it was to secure the appearance, as far as possible, of an English suffrage in connexion with that ceremony. When he pledged himself, in the most public and solemn manner, two years later, to uphold the laws of Edward the Confessor, it was with the hope of deterring the southern English from taking part with the insurgents of the north.* In so far as those laws

* Juravit super omnes reliquias Ecclesiæ Sti. Albani, tactisque sacrosanctis evangeliis, bonas et approbatas antiquas regni leges—inviolabiliter observare.—Matt. Paris, *Vit. Abbat.* 30.

might be observed consistently with his main purpose as a conqueror, he would probably observe them—but assuredly no further. In the great meeting at Salisbury, the pledge to govern according to the good laws of Edward, and of his predecessors, was renewed.*

Laws of Edward the Confessor—how far perpetuated under the Norman kings.

It was not the wish of the Normans themselves that those laws should be wholly superseded. Even in the worst times, they were upheld in their substance, especially in civil causes, and, with very limited exception, in criminal causes. The feudal subordinations introduced by the Conquest, left the hundred courts, and the county courts, much as they had been; and justice as between man and man, and offences against the public peace, were dealt with, for the most part, as in past times. It was, in many respects, greatly to the advantage of the Normans that this course should be taken.

An instance showing the value of these laws even to the conquerors we see in the use which they made of the Saxon hundred for the security of their own lives. When the natives could no longer resist their oppressors openly, they not unfrequently avenged themselves upon them by private onslaught. The result was a law which declared, that on the discovery of the body of a murdered man, if the deceased could not be proved to have been an Englishman, it should be presumed that he was a Norman, and the hundred in that case was required to bring the homicide to justice, or to pay his fine.†

The laws administered in the local courts were certainly in substance the same, but the Saxon thanes and officials, as the administrators, had been displaced by the strangers. It was something, however, to

* Madox's *Exchequer*, c. i. 5.

† Wilkins, *Leges Anglo-Saxonicæ*, 228 et seq. Hoveden, ad an. 1180. In the reign of Richard I. a hundred was fined on account of persons found in it who had died from want, not from violence of any kind—a custom which seemed to embrace the principle of a poor-law.—*Rolls and Records*, Introd. § xxi.

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have so much of these 'wise customs' preserved. The free spirit in which they had originated might some day return to them, develop, and mature them. But for the present, a Norman might kill an Englishman with impunity, if he could only say that he thought him a rebel.* And while to the Saxon was ceded the doubtful privilege of clearing himself by ordeal, the Norman might clear himself by duel, or simply by his oath. About a century and a half subsequent to the Conquest, the church of Rome abolished trial by ordeal, and in that act rendered service to humanity.† Still the use of French in all the law courts, which continued to the time of Edward III., is of itself sufficient to indicate the inequality of the two races before the tribunals of the country. If we suppose this custom a necessity, the officials being all Frenchmen, the disadvantage to the English was not the less on that account.

Trial by jury—its history.

In one material respect the Anglo-Norman legislation soon became an improvement on that of the Anglo-Saxons. Lawyers of great learning have been wont to speak of our trial by jury as an institution older than the Conquest.‡ But we have seen that men of learning who have traversed this ground more recently, have made it appear, that trial by jury, in our sense, was not known in England earlier than the reign of Henry II.§ We have seen, elsewhere, that what was often described as trial by *jurors*, under the Saxon kings, was in fact a trial by *magistrates*.‖ The jurors were witnesses. They did not deliver a joint verdict on the case: each juror gave his evidence, and the conjoint evidence so given, was intended to guide the functionary presiding in forming and pronouncing a judgment. The persons selected, accordingly, to serve on those juries, were always chosen on the

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* *Decreta Præsulum Normannorum.* Wilkins, *Concilia*, 366.

† *Notæ ad Eadmerum*, edit. Selden, 204.

‡ Coke; Spelman; Blackstone. § Palgrave, i. c. viii.

‖ See pp. 264–267.

ground of neighbourhood, or as being persons supposed to know most of the case. The jury so constituted, was not to include persons whose nearness of kin was likely to bias their depositions. For a lawful cause, also, any member of such a jury might be challenged, either by the accused or by the accuser. Even such an intervention of the principle of a jury, inasmuch as it made the evidence of guilt to depend generally on the unbiassed testimony of neighbours and equals, was a great protection to the subject.

But much was gained when a jury was chosen from the 'country,' and empowered to judge concerning the evidence adduced, and to say guilty or not guilty. The decision of the case then virtually rested, not with the magistrate, but with good men from the locality, panelled for the occasion, and dismissed when the occasion was over. Trial by a jury of witnesses had obtained in Normandy, as well as in England, before the Conquest; but trial by jury, in the modern sense, dates from about the time when the church abolished trial by ordeal.

Before that time, indeed, individuals, as a matter of favour, and commonly of purchase, were allowed to submit their cause to the judgment of twelve or twenty-four men from their neighbourhood, and so to be exempt from the decision of the magistrate. Such cases, however, were rare, and restricted, we may be assured, to Normans. But they involved a principle which was to become stable, and eminently fruitful. When trial by ordeal ceased, and some change became necessary, our lawyers might have fallen back upon the civil law, which would have left the judgment both of law and evidence wholly to the judge. But they took the onward course. They retained the usages which time and experience had sanctioned, and they changed jurors who could only give evidence, into jurors who might deliver a verdict.*

* Palgrave, ii. c. viii. It is important to mark, that this improved form of trial by jury was the growth of the Norman intellect in Eng-

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It is important, however, to remember, that trial by jury, in this sense, was restricted to courts acting by the king's writ or commission, it did not extend to the hundred court, nor to the court-leet. In the latter courts, the jurors continued to be witnesses, and nothing more.

How the office of jurors rose with the custom of taxation.

We must not leave the question of trial by jurors without touching on one more significant fact relating to it. The design of the Conqueror in securing an

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land. It had no previous existence in Normandy. The same may be said of much beside in the history of Norman jurisprudence in this country.

Selden, in his learned dissertation on Fleta, has shown that the Roman law was the law of Britain while under the Romans, and that Papinian, the prince of lawyers, as he was called, was for a time at the head of judicial affairs in this country. But with the departure of the Romans the imperial law wholly disappears from our history, until we come to the age of Glanvil, Bracton, and Fleta, whose lives cover the reigns of Henry II. and Henry III. In the writings of these great authorities on English law, there are frequent citations from the civil law; but these citations are never made as being in themselves law to the English. They are adduced as corroborating English law where they happen to agree with it, or as giving the decisions of experience and reason on points for which our own law may not have made provision. The year 1140 is mentioned as the time from which some attention began to be given to the study of Roman law in England; and Roger Vicarius, formerly abbot of Bec, so far distinguished himself as a teacher at Oxford on this subject, in 1149, that in 1153 Stephen issued a prohibition against him. But the study was not suppressed by that means. Edward I., the great lawyer among our kings, availed himself of assistance from that source, but always in dependence on the sanction of our legislature. But from the accession of Edward III. the course of our legislation is little influenced from that quarter. The feeling of the nation was always with the common law, and so much opposed to the use of the civil law, that it was kept within limits which were comparatively, if not altogether, harmless. Blackstone, indeed, complains heavily of the intricacies and refinements introduced by these Norman lawyers, 'to supersede the more homely, but more intelligible, maxims of distributive justice among the Saxons. And, to say the truth, these scholastic reformers have transmitted their dialect and finesse to posterity so interwoven in the body of our legal polity, that they cannot now be taken out without a manifest injury to the substance.'—*Commentaries*, bk. iv. c. 33. See also Introd. § 3, and Hale's *Common Law*. We have four courts in which the canon or civil law is acknowledged, subject to various restrictions,—the ecclesiastical courts, the military and admiralty courts, and the courts of the universities.—Selden's *Dissertation on Fleta*.

entry of all persons and properties in *Domesday Book*, was to possess himself of the information necessary for making his exactions, and exercising his arbitrary will, in a manner that should be scientific and certain. But this information could be obtained only by means of jurors; and the jurors pannelled for this purpose in every locality, consisted of necessity, not of Normans only, nor chiefly, but mostly of the old inhabitants. The Saxon jurors in such cases included the yeoman, the burgess, and even the churl. The local evidence thus supplied furnished for that time a sufficient basis for local taxation. It is material to observe that the people of the district did in effect determine the liabilities of the district, and that the king tacitly consented to be bound by the evidence so obtained. As the jurors in this case formed a recognised corporate authority, there would be a tendency in every such body to act, upon occasions, with a degree of independence and spirit which individuals in such circumstances could rarely assume when acting separately. The record of *Domesday Book* made its report concerning the persons and properties of the kingdom in 1085. But suppose a few years only to pass, and it is obvious that this record must cease to be a satisfactory guide to the rateable property of the country. To ascertain the kind and degree of change that has taken place, new jurors must now be sworn, and new inquest made. But in this manner the precedent introduced by the Conqueror becomes a custom. It grows imperceptibly to be a recognised principle, that, in a sense at least, the people must not be taxed without their consent—the liabilities of the district must be virtually fixed by the 'good men' of the district. The germ of the most liberal and healthy provision of Magna Charta, and of much more, lay in this usage. This good did the first William for our country, though his selfish and iron nature meant it not.

Relations of jury and parliament.

This wholesome local custom had become general, before it became law that tallages should no longer

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be levied without the consent of parliament. In fact, the jury principle had never ceased to be a great educating principle among the English people. Its benefits were not restricted to the sifting of evidence in judicial cases. It trained the people to the discharge of political duties, and to the assertion of political rights; and it taught even the proudest of our kings that there were points in political proceedings where popular feeling had raised a boundary, and set up an authority, which it might be dangerous to treat with disrespect.*

Rufus—Henry and Stephen.

But this popular feeling was to seeth long in comparative secrecy before rising to the surface of history. During the short reign of William Rufus, the arbitrary temper of the government, and the sufferings of the Saxons, were even greater than under the Conqueror. But Henry I. is described as 'the Lion of 'Justice.' And certainly, in checking the rapacity of the barons as he did, and in counterbalancing the influence of some of the more powerful among them by raising up many new men to the same rank, he gave evidence both of capacity and courage. His sway was that of comparative order. But the reign of Stephen, which followed, brings us to the lowest deep in political disorganization and popular suffering known to English history since the Conquest. The pious monk who fills up the page of the *Saxon Chronicle* at Peterborough, towards the close of this reign, is so appalled by the retrospect of these intestine wars and miseries, that they become to him the tokens that Christ and his saints must have ceased to concern themselves longer with the interests of humanity.†

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* Palgrave, i. c. viii.

† The tortures which the chronicler describes as those inflicted on male and female by the plunderers on both sides, in the hope of extorting property from them, are so horrible, that we must hope they were in some degree mere rumours, exaggerated by the alarm of the times. But the following may be taken as history. 'I neither can nor may tell,' says the monk, 'all the wounds, nor all the pains, which they did to the

But on the accession of Henry II. a new complexion of affairs soon becomes visible.

The king's court.

The great instrument through which England was governed, during this Norman period, was the king's council. This council, however, bore only a limited resemblance to a Witanagemote. It was the manner of our Anglo-Norman kings to keep the great church festivals—Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide—in their different palaces, at Westminster, Winchester, Gloucester, and elsewhere. The pomp of the court was then to be present. Our kings in those days attached great importance to such pageantries.* But many grave proceedings were associated with such occasions. The king's court, as the centre of the opulence and splendour of the realm, was distinct from that court in its relation to government.

Legislative power of the king's council.

All persons belonging to the king's court for purposes of legislation and government were called to it by special summons. These persons consisted of barons only, who, as peers, possessed their rank in common. So convened, these nobles were supposed to represent the subjects of the realm generally, and

wretched men of this land: and this lasted the nineteen years while Stephen was king, and always it was worse and worse. They laid contributions on the towns every now and then, and called it tenserie; and when the wretched men had nothing more to give, then they plundered and burnt all the towns: and you might easily go a whole day's journey and never find a man remaining in a town, nor the land tilled. Then was corn dear, and flesh, and cheese, and butter, for there was none in the land. Wretched men died of hunger; some went a-begging who formerly were rich men; some fled out of the country. If two or three men came riding to a town, all the township fled on account of them: they thought they were robbers. The bishops and clergy constantly cursed them, but this was nothing to them; for they were all accursed, and forsworn, and lost.'—A.D. 1137.

* One who lived in the court of the Conqueror says—'He was very dignified; each year he wore his crown thrice, as often as he was in England. On Easter he wore it at Winchester, on Whitsuntide at Westminster, on Christmas at Gloucester; and at these times there were with him *all* the powerful men from over *all England;* archbishops and diocesan bishops, abbots and earls, thanes and knights.—*Chron. Sax.* A.D. 1087.

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the Anglo-Norman kings deemed it expedient to act, in many respects, as by the voice of that assembly. The laws passed during this period, were the laws of the king, issued with the advice or consent of this council.* It is true, the subject was not always secured by this means against arbitrary measures on the part of the crown. Still, the idea familiar to all men came to be, that the valid form of law was that which gave it as the act of the king, with the concurrence of this great council; and that government according to such law, was the only just government. The laws of the Conqueror were issued in his own name and in the name of his council; and the celebrated Charter attributed to Henry I. states, that the king gives his subjects the laws of Edward the Confessor, with the emendations of his father, and that he does this with the consent of his barons.† The Saxons, we have seen, were earnest and constant in their call for the protection of these laws; and before the close of the period now under review, many of the Normans had learnt to join in the demand. The spirit of this demand in both cases, was a desire to be governed by such known laws and customs as should be a protection against caprice and injustice, whether coming from the hands of kings or magistrates.

Judicial power of the council.

Concerning the judicial power which belonged to the council of barons, even under the Conqueror, we have some evidence in the proceedings reported as having taken place in the sixth year of that reign. In that year the king, with the advice of his assembled prelates and barons, put an end to the controversy which had grown up between the archbishops of York and Canterbury in regard to precedence. The decision was in favour of Canterbury. In that year also, the charge of treason was brought before this council against

* *Edinburgh Rev.* xxxv. 1–43. Allen's *Inquiry into the Growth of the Royal Prerogative in England.*

† Madox, *Hist. Exchеq.* c. i.

earl Waltheof, and on the verdict there given by his peers the earl was beheaded. In the reign of Richard the First we meet with a striking instance of the power in this form, which the Norman barons had learnt to regard as pertaining to them. The king, before going on his crusade, had appointed his chancellor, William Longchamp, as justiciary, or vicar of the kingdom, conjointly with the bishop of Durham. But Longchamp assumed the whole function to himself. The barons took upon them to chastise the folly and insolence of this man, which they did by depriving him of his office and sending him into exile. This, though done professedly in the name of the king, was to go far towards asserting the responsibilities of the ministers of state to the country, and the consequent right of impeachment.*

Bitter and protracted disputes arose during this period between the kings of England and the court of Rome. They were especially conspicuous in the long reigns of Henry I. and Henry II. In carrying on this warfare against the secular encroachments of the papacy, always urged by the ecclesiastical power, as usual, under spiritual pretences, both the kings above named, and especially the latter, issued their many protests, not simply in their own name, but in the name of the great council of the nation. By this means the convening of this council came to be more frequent and regular. Its proceedings became more formal. Its authority was more generally acknowledged. Its position in all respects became more in harmony with our idea of a representative body or parliament.

The officer who presided in the king's court, in the absence of the king, was the Chief Justiciar. To that officer the guardianship of the realm was entrusted when the king was beyond sea. With the justiciar

* *Rolls and Records of the Court before the King's Justiciars*, i. Introduction.

were associated, as alike officers of the king's court, the Constable, the Mareschal, the Chamberlain, the Chancellor, and the Treasurer. The division of labour which these different titles imply, helped to bring about the division of the one original court into several. In brief, the four courts at Westminster were originally so many subdivisions of the king's court. These courts all made their appearance towards the close of the period now under review. They came into existence by degrees, and appear to have been nearly coeval —lawyers have been willing to regard them as strictly so, that there might be no dispute about precedence.*

The king's relation to the law.

But the idea of the kingly office, strongly embodied in the laws of the Anglo-Saxons, and in the English laws after the Conquest, is—that the king is the great administrator of law, the fountain of justice. His court, which, though central, moved from place to place, was designed to keep watch over all other courts; so that justice failing anywhere, might, as a last resort, be always found there. Local courts resembled only so many local committees, delegated by the king to administer his laws in his name. The same may be said even of the Court of Common Pleas, or of King's Bench, the Court of Exchequer, and the Court of Chancery, as they make their appearance in the manner above mentioned. The labour in all these courts was properly the king's labour, and those who serve there do so in his stead. *Could* the king do the whole, the legal conception of his position would say that he *should* do it. But that this work should have been done in great part from the first, and more and more afterwards, by delegation, has been a matter of necessity, and a benefit of incalculable amount to the subject. Our early Norman kings often judged in person, both in civil and criminal causes. It was by so doing that the Conqueror, Henry the First, and Henry the Second, made themselves felt by their

* Madox, c. ii. xix.

judicial sagacity, no less than by their high station. The separation of the king's person from all part in such proceedings, in the manner familiar to ourselves, is a point of civilization which it has required many centuries to develop.

The idea that the king is in all places where the laws are administered, comes from the same source with the ideas that the king never dies, and that he can do no wrong: All these notions are well known to be fictions, but they are fictions which have their uses, and which have some foundation in truth. Such conceptions of the kingly office are purely of Roman origin. The Teutonic nations knew nothing of them. The canon law of the clergy took its form and spirit from the civil law of the empire, and churchmen were naturally concerned to uphold both. In this attempt, they were aided by the leading provincials, who, though vanquished by the barbarians, survived to exercise great influence over them. It was the policy of these parties to extend their conception of sovereignty as it had existed in the emperors, to the rude kings who had come into their place. It was for the bold and free co-adjutors of those kings to see that these fine words should be little else than words—that kings who had become such by the swords of their followers, should not rule to their injury, nor without their influence. It was in this manner that monarchies, more or less mixed, were substituted all over Europe, in place of the purely despotic monarchy of the Roman empire. The political history of the European nations, is the history of these opposite tendencies, which combine to present results that are nowhere exactly alike, but which have something everywhere in common. For in European history, monarchies which are not in our sense constitutional, are subject to checks in many forms, sufficient to distinguish the prerogatives of modern kings from the absolute authority of the imperial masters of the Roman world. The idea of the king's ubiquity comes down to us with our most ancient laws; and

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the idea of the divine origin of his office, which the clergy have professed to derive from Scripture, is almost as old. But the notions that the king never dies, and that he can do no wrong, were of much slower growth. The law of primogeniture was not enough to determine the succession to the throne, even among our Anglo-Norman sovereigns, still less among the Anglo-Saxons. Before it was ceded that the king could do no wrong, it was necessary that the right to impeach the ministers who might do wrong in his name should be acknowledged and settled; and before it was admitted that the king could never die, it was imperative that such a fixed provision should be made against the accident of his incompetency, whether from tender years or other causes, as should assure the subject of the safety of the State on the demise of a sovereign. In the period under review, our constitutional history was not so far advanced as to allow of the admission of such abstractions as the basis of law. Even so late as the time of King John, the Saxonized citizens of London recognised no king until John had been proclaimed by their mayor.*

Itinerant judges.

Our kings must often have entrusted the administration of justice to their justiciaries, and to officers much more subordinate, before the times of Henry the Second. But it is not until some while after the accession of that monarch that we find England divided into law circuits, and judges in *eyre*—that is, 'itinerant,' or travelling judges, appointed to hold their assizes in given places, and at given times, in those circuits.

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* Allen's *Inquiry*. A king's death was the usual signal for a general disorganization of the community; and until another was established upon his throne, no protection could be found in the law.—*Rolls and Records*, Introduction. When Henry III. was near death, the citizens of London had chosen one mayor, the magnates another; and the citizens, with their strong Anglo-Saxon notions concerning the interval between the death of a king and the proclamation of his successor as being an interval in which there was no king, waited for the death of Henry, with the intention of rising at that moment against the aldermanic class.—Ibid. § xlvii.

The first division of the kingdom was into six circuits. Subsequently the six were reduced to four; the country north of the Humber being one of the four. For that northern division six justices were appointed, and on account of distance, and still more on account of the condition of those provinces, these northern functionaries were vested with special powers. This is one of the measures which have contributed to make the reign of Henry II. so memorable in our history.*

Further growth of the popular element in government.

But, important as these organizations must appear, under any view of them, the instructions given to the judges concerning the modes in which they were to obtain the evidence necessary to enable them to detect the delinquent, were fraught in a still higher degree with good for the future. For it was in this part of the proceedings that not only the jury principle, but a kind of representative principle, came into new and most salutary action.

When Henry II. returned from Normandy, in the year 1170, he found the people loud in their complaints on account of the extortions and oppressions which had been practised upon them in his absence. Henry, with the advice of his great council (*optimates*), sent judges (*barones errantes*) to visit the different counties, and to collect evidence in relation to these charges. In pursuance of these instructions, the judges were empowered to demand on oath, from all barons, knights, and freemen, and from all citizens and burgesses, that they should say the truth concerning all that should be required of them on behalf of the king, and that they should not conceal the truth for love or hatred, favour or affection, gift or reward. As the sheriffs and the bailiffs were the parties most vehemently accused, their conduct was to be especially investigated. Inquiry was to be made concerning the amount of money which they had unduly levied on

* Madox, c. iii.

the hundreds or townships since the king had passed into Normandy, so that every excess in rating might be ascertained, and every injury done by that means corrected. Care was to be taken also, to discover in what instances the guilty had been allowed to escape without punishment, and the innocent had been accused without cause. So wide was the range of this inquiry, that all landholders were embraced in it, and required to give a true account of all things taken from their tenants, by lawful judgment, or without judgment. Archdeacons and deans were subject to this scrutiny, in common with sheriffs and bailiffs. Great was the terror excited by these proceedings. The result, indeed, was not altogether such as the fears of the offenders, and the hopes of the injured, had led them to expect. But the effect was good. It showed the delinquents the power that might at any time be evoked against them. Nearly all the sheriffs were removed from their office, and many of their subordinates were subjected to heavy fines.*

It will be seen, that in all these proceedings, the judges administered the law by means of jurors. In so doing, they made their uses, as far as practicable, of the old Saxon hundred. It should also be observed, that they conformed themselves to another old Saxon usage, by accepting 'four men and the reeve,' as representative of a township. In a grand inquest held at St. Albans in the time of John, each of the demesne towns of the king sent its four good men and its reeve. We read also of 'four discreet knights,' and sometimes of twelve men, as required from every county, corresponding with the four men summoned from the borough, or the jurors summoned for the hundred. As these parties had been wont to present the grievances of the people before the representatives of the king in the old shiremotes, so now they presented them before the judges, who had come into the place of the sovereign by a special appointment.

* Palgrave, i. c. ix.

Recognition of two great principles.

It is not easy to speak with confidence touching some of the nicer shades of fact in the history of our constitution during this stage. We may see, however, very clearly, that the government was carried on by means of two main elements—by authorities deputed mostly by the crown on the one hand, and by means of evidence to be furnished by the people on the other. Over a large surface the king's power could avail nothing, apart from evidence so obtained; at the same time, such evidence could avail nothing, apart from the assent of the crown. Great was the power of the crown; but great also was the power of jurors, whether as restricted in their function to the presentation of evidence, or as permitted to be judges of evidence when presented.

Course of authority among the Germanic tribes.

The history of authority among the Teutonic races is a history which moves upward, from the less to the greater. The state begins with the smaller community, which grows large by embracing other communities like itself. The unit is before the aggregate; and to the last, the unit is mindful of this fact, and jealous of its individuality. The tithings make up the hundred, the hundreds may become a shire, and the shires may become a kingdom—but the lowest was first, and is not content to be injuriously overshadowed by the highest, which has come last. Sovereignty among the Anglo-Saxons always bore the marks of being thus originated; and sovereignty in the case of the proudest of the Normans was powerfully influenced and modified by these antecedents. With the Celtic tribes, the policy which obtained has been the reverse of all this. The course of power with that race has been from above—from the greater to the less.

Out of the uses of the representative principle for remedial and judicial purposes above mentioned, sprang its uses, as we shall see in another place, for legislative purposes, and for the general purposes of finance.*

* *Edinburgh Rev.* xxxvi. 290. Palgrave's *Commonwealth*, i. c. 9.

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When once a political machinery has become established, nothing is more common than to find it made to embrace many things not included in its original design.

Judicial corruption.

Such, then, was the kind of effort made by the best kings of this period to protect the bearers of the public burdens against oppression, and to secure that the administration of justice between man and man should be without fear or favour. The facts might seem to warrant the conclusion that the acts of the crown itself would be especially marked by considerateness, humanity, and respect for the law. But no such inference is sustained by history. Places of emolument, even the chief offices of state, were commonly a matter of purchase; and men had learned to defend the usage gravely and without a blush, insisting that the man who had paid a heavy price for such a position was more likely to avoid what might occasion the loss of it, than the man who obtained it without cost. Our early Norman kings obtained large sums by this means. In reality, the monarchs of this interval felt little scruple about the modes of obtaining money, and appear to have thought, that while it certainly became them to see that the subject was neither despoiled nor oppressed by others, such acts as practised by themselves could rarely be a just ground for complaint.*

It is notorious that in the reign of Henry II. there was no court in the land in which justice was

* *Rolls and Records of the Court held before the King's Justiciars*, i. Introduction. No name is more disgracefully associated with the judicial corruptness of his times than that of Richard I., who seems to have inherited the covetousness of the first William, along with his military passion.

During Richard's absence from the kingdom, his brother John acted with the nobles who were intent on removing Longchamp from the office of justiciar. John one day came to a meeting, and said that Longchamp was prepared to defy them all if he would only himself grant him his protection, for which he was ready to pay 700*l.* within a week. John added: 'I am in want of money—a word to the wise,' and retired. The nobles arranged to lend John 500*l.* to prevent his virtually re-selling the office of justiciar for 700*l.*—Ibid. lxiv. lxv.

not known to be bought and sold as a common article of merchandize. The oppressive means by which the crown enriched itself daily in those times, seem to us almost incredible. Money was sometimes given to appease the personal anger of the king, or to obtain his good offices against an adversary. Fines were extorted as the condition of allowing men to implead a certain person, to sue in a certain court, or to enter upon lands which they had recovered by law. Money was accepted from a suitor to help him against his antagonist, and sometimes from both suitors to help each against the other. In the latter case, it is supposed there was usually sufficient grace left to ensure the return of the money to the suitor who had not been successful. The Jews, and persons charged with criminal offences, were made to be a prolific source of revenue. When kings could thus sell what should be priceless, it is easy to imagine what inferior judges would do. The privileges, and the most natural rights, of towns, were purchased at heavy costs, and on every confirmation of such grants new exactions were made. But, of all the forms of tyranny prevalent at that time, none is so extraordinary as the power which the king was allowed to assume over the persons and possessions of wards, and with regard to marriage generally, among the families of his nobles. The wards were commonly disposed of to the highest bidder; and a tenant in chief of the crown found one consequence of his elevation to be, that he could neither marry himself, nor dispose of his children in marriage, according to his inclination, without purchasing that liberty by a considerable payment to the sovereign.*

But good came from these excesses. Normans and

* Towards the close of this period councils forbad the holding of tournaments, but Richard I. presumed to grant dispensations from such canons, and exacted a fee for so doing.—*Rolls and Records*, Introd. § xxii. Madox, c. iii. § 6, 7; c. vi. § 1; c. vii.–xiv. On nearly all questions touching our constitutional history during this period the work of Madox is invaluable.

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English were thus prepared, from the feeling of their common wrongs, to act together for their common deliverance. The provisions of Magna Charta point to nearly all the customs and abuses above mentioned as among the grievances of the times.*

Difficulty of resistance.

But these exactions were made, for the most part, on individuals, or on isolated bodies of men. It is true, the individuals, and the bodies so dealt with, belonged to classes. But the individual noble found it difficult to move his brother nobles; and the humble burgesses of one town possessed little means of influencing their brother burgesses of other towns. Could either have succeeded, the movement would have been, at best, but the movement of a particular grade or class. Thus the power to resist was to be for a while divided and weak, while the power to oppress remained central and strong.

Power of the crown from its great wealth.

It is to be further observed, that with so many corrupt sources of revenue open to them, and with such large personal domains, the kings of this period were much less dependent than their successors on general taxation. The wealth of the crown in lands was enormous, and these the king could tax at his own discretion, as being his own. He could levy taxes, also, on all towns not ceded to his nobles. To the taxes, under the name of tallage, levied on the royal lands and on the towns, no limit was assigned, save such as prudence, or some sense of justice and humanity, might suggest.* The

* The tallage rendered to the king (excluding the tallage of the Jews) was raised 'upon his demeasnes, escheats, and wardships, and upon the burghs and towns of the realm.'—Madox, c. xvii. 480. When the contribution was made for lands that were not of military tenure, it was called *hidage*, or *aid;* when it was paid out of knights' fees, it was called *scutage;* strictly speaking, it was a *tallage* only as it came from towns and boroughs. It came upon all towns, and less heavily on the counties than on the towns.—Ibid. c. xvii. When Madox says that the king imposed tallage on the 'towns of *the realm*,' he of course excepts those ceded in whole or in part to the local nobility—all beside were royal towns. 'If men were not the king's immediate tenants, they were not tallageable to the king, but to their immediate lord.'—Ibid. 498. 'But such inferior lord could not rightfully raise tallage oftener, or in any other manner, than the king raised tallage on his own demeasnes.'—Ibid. 516.

result of a tallage on the lands of the king was, in most instances, a supply of money; the result of it on the lands of his barons, was a supply of men. These statements do not comprehend everything relating to this obscure and entangled subject, and some of them may be open to a degree of exception; but they give, we believe, the substance of the matter as it stood. The liberties of the subject have grown out of the necessities of the crown. But our early Norman kings knew little of such necessities. During the first three or four reigns after the Conquest, the council of barons did not concern themselves about what the king might choose to do in respect to the occupants of his own lands, nor in relation to the towns immediately subject to him. Until the age of the Great Charter, accordingly, tallages, as we have stated, were imposed pretty much at the king's will. But where there is no will of a representative body to impose restrictions, there remains the law of circumstances, to which the most arbitrary are bound more or less to conform themselves.

Origin of subsidies—tenths and fifteenths.

It is not until we reach the reign of Richard I. that tallages become known under the name of *subsidies*— and such names as *tenths* and *fifteenths*. These terms indicate the growth of system in the business of taxation. They suppose a definite and settled basis of assessment common to the whole kingdom.*

Danegelt.

The tax called Danegelt was of Saxon origin. It had been imposed on all the counties of England, and was designed to supply a fund for making special provision against invasions from the north of Europe. It was continued after the Conquest under the same

* Tenths and fifteenths were levied only on 'moveables.' In 1301, all the household furniture, utensils, clothes, money, horses, corn, and other provisions in the town of Colchester were valued by the tax-gatherers at 518*l.* 16*s.* 0½*d.*; the fifteenth on which yielded 34*l.* 12*s.* 7*d.* —Eden's *State of the Poor*, 26. A fifteenth was a fifteenth on the rated value of such property, and a tenth was a tenth; but the rating seems to have been very low.—Brady, *On Boroughs*, 69.

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name, and for the same purpose. But as the danger to which it pointed by its designation died away, the impost itself became irregular, partial, and at length ceased to be levied. It was the ship-money of those days, and was paid for the last time soon after the accession of Henry II.*

Duties on imports and exports.

Of course, the king imposed duties on imports and exports, and this he appears to have done on his own authority. This branch of revenue was generally farmed by contractors. The articles on which the heaviest duties were paid were wine, wool, and leather. Thus early, too, considerable sums were obtained by the sale of patents and monopolies. In the notice of London dues, in the reign of Richard I., we find the first mention of tin, as an article of traffic, since the departure of the Romans.†

Retrospect.

We have thus glanced at some great facts indicating the effect of the Norman Conquest on Government in England. We have seen that the great proprietors among the Anglo-Saxons at that time were comparatively few in number. Even among these few, the earl Waltheof was almost the only man who could be said to be at all formidable. With him fell the last hope of the English. This was in less than seven years after the battle of Hastings. The wealth and power of the Saxon nobility passed thus suddenly and completely into other hands. The enemy had not only killed, but had taken possession, and ruled as it pleased him. Those subject to his will suffered long from his scorn, his spoliation, and his tyranny.

Good resulting from the Conquest.

But the effect of this change was not all evil. The Norman government proved to be a strong government. Only by such a government could that old enemy the Dane be taught to respect the shores of this island. In securing the kingdom against all further danger from that quarter the Normans did a good work. And though by their settlement in Eng-

* Madox, c. xvii. 475–480. † Ibid. c. xviii.

land they added still another race to that ever fretting mixture of races which had found their home in this country, they came as the new and more powerful element which was to contribute to give a new unity to the whole. The Saxons had only partially vanquished the Britons. The lesser states of the Heptarchy had submitted but imperfectly to the greater. The struggle between the Saxons and the Danes had issued in an angry compromise, rather than in a peaceful settlement. The Normans were the first real masters of the island since the departure of the Romans. Under the kings of this race, England became properly a kingdom, compact, potent, and promised to be some day equal to great things.

Oversight of the Conqueror.

But great politicians are not wise at all times. An excess of precaution is sometimes fatal to their object. The Conqueror was solicitous to be known in history as the founder of a dynasty. With this view, his forethought was exercised to bequeath large powers to his successors. But he could not ensure that the men to wield those powers should be always moderate and wise men. In the absence of this security, the greater the power vested in the crown, the greater the danger of excess on the part of its possessor, and the greater the danger of the disaffection naturally generated by excess. Excesses came, and attempts were made, from time to time, to abate the hostile feeling thus awakened. Some good laws and usages which had obtained in England were ceded to the English, and others which had obtained in Normandy were ceded to the Normans. The jealousies which grew up in this manner between the crown and the aristocracy, were favourable to popular liberty. Upon occasions, the king and the noble bid high for the popular suffrage.

Distinctions of race greatly diminished.

Still, the abuses of an almost unbounded prerogative continued to be great. But as the Normans were exposed to those evils only in a somewhat less degree than the English, the whole kingdom came ere long

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to have its reasons for wishing to impose some restrictions on a power so exorbitant. This it became the more possible to do, as the two races, the conquerors and the conquered, became much blended together, by intermarriages and other influences. This, we are assured, by an authority of the time, was so much the tendency of affairs before the close of the reign of Henry II., that in the community at large, the distinction between Saxon and Norman had almost disappeared. Even the differences of language were rapidly passing away.*

Nor should we forget to refer again in this place to the educating influence of those wholesome customs which made the administration of the king's laws depend so largely on the will of the king's subjects in the capacity of jurors, always as witnesses, if not always as judges. It may be true that the laws administered in the Hundred court, and in the County court, could not be said to be always the old Saxon laws. Nevertheless, the English clung with great affection to those tribunals, and to the popular freedom and influence inseparable from them. The manner of obtaining evidence, and the mode of administration generally, remained, in most respects, as they had been when the law itself was without change from foreign influences. We must add, that the controversy of Henry II. with Becket, the long absence of Richard I. from the kingdom, the imbecility and vices of his brother John, and the disasters in Normandy, which left the kings of England without that resource to fall back upon in their times of weakness—all these were circumstances which tended to strengthen the heart of a great patriotic party, which had become intent on restraining that kingly power whence so much evil had come. In the Great Charter they achieved more than the past had allowed them to promise themselves.

Circumstances favourable to the patriotic party.

* *Dialogus de Scaccario*, lib. i. c. x.

Reign of John.

The reign of John is made up of three memorable quarrels—the first with the king of France, the second with the pope, the third with his own barons.

His disasters in Normandy.

Arthur, duke of Brittany, was nephew to John, and vassal to Philip, king of France. John murdered his nephew, or at least caused him to be murdered; and Philip took up arms to avenge the death of his vassal. The effect was, that of the domains of the English crown in France, the province of Guienne alone continued in any sort of relation to it.

His quarrel with Innocent III.

Innocent III. was the last of the Hildebrand school of pontiffs. He insisted that the vacant see of Canterbury should be filled by an ecclesiastic chosen by the monks of Canterbury. John insisted that the choice should be with the bishops of the province. The former course would be favourable to the pretensions of the Roman see, the latter to those of the English crown. The dispute thus originated rose so high, that the kingdom was laid under an interdict, the king himself was excommunicated, and the king of France was stimulated by Innocent to add the invasion of England to his invasion of Normandy. To such a state of desertion and weakness had John reduced himself by his incapacity and his vices, that he saw no means of saving himself except by making his submission to Innocent, and consenting to hold even the crown of England as a fief from the papacy. Having descended to this depth of degradation in the most formal manner, the thunders of the Vatican, which had been so long directed against him, were ready to be wielded in his favour, and the king of France was induced to desist from his threatened invasion.

These were extraordinary humiliations. But they were the result of obvious causes. John's deed of blood disqualified him for resisting Philip in Normandy. In England, his craven and cruel temper, his rapacity and oppressions, his treachery and licentiousness, were such as to have arrayed nearly all men

against him. What marvel that such a man should be no match for Innocent III.

John became king in 1199, and it is not until 1215, the last year but one of his reign, that the disaffection of his barons ripens into open revolt. This disaffection must not be supposed to have resulted from large political speculation on the part of the nobles of that age. The insolent behaviour of the king towards the wives and daughters of many of them, was one strong ingredient in the cup of their resentment. In other respects, the changes desired consisted of remedies against evils, everywhere more or less felt, which flowed naturally from the abuses of the feudal authority on the part of the subject, as well as on the part of the sovereign. The barons knew, that in attempting to impose new restrictions on the power of the crown, it would be necessary that their own power should become subject to new limitations.

Archbishop Langton.

Stephen Langton, the archbishop of Canterbury, had been raised to the primacy by Innocent, against the will of the king. An archbishop so promoted was not likely to expose himself to the resentment of his patron by becoming a patriot. A patriot, however, Langton proved. When John resigned the kingdom a second time into the hands of the pope, Langton rebuked the silence of the lay peers who were present, by delivering his protest against the proceeding. His more cultivated mind fitted him for becoming eminently serviceable to the unlettered barons in the struggle to which they were committed. At Winchester, the king had been constrained to pledge himself to abolish all unjust laws, and to restore the good laws of the Confessor. In a council at St. Albans he renewed this pledge.

The barons.

At a meeting of prelates and barons in St. Paul's, Langton produced the charter attributed to Henry I., and made it clear that the principles there laid down went far towards providing against the abuses which had become so vexatious and formidable. Strange to

say, important as were the provisions of this charter, it appears to have dropped out of men's thoughts. John declared he had never heard of it. So rude or unsettled had been the times since the days of the first Henry. But to be able to fall back thus on the laws of a Norman king in seeking the redress of present grievances, was felt to be a great advantage.

The next meeting of the barons was in the abbey of St. Edmundsbury, where the substance of their demands was agreed upon, and the parties swore to be faithful to each other until those demands should become law. From St. Edmundsbury they directed their steps towards London, which they entered in military array, for the purpose of presenting their complaints, in the form of a petition, to the king. John replied that he must be allowed some time for consideration. Both parties had sought the good offices of the pope, but Innocent sided with the king, as his vassal, to the great indignation of the nobles. In Easter week, both parties were active in mustering forces; but the followers of the king were few compared with those of the barons. John took possession of Oxford. The barons, with more than two thousand knights, and other armed men in proportion, marched to within fifteen miles of that place. Langton and the earl of Pembroke, who were still with the king, were deputed to ascertain the demands of the leaders of this force. Their demands were committed to writing, probably by Langton himself; and on his return, the archbishop read them aloud to the king, along with a conclusion which stated, that if these terms were not accepted, the barons were pledged to take possession of the royal castles and domains, as precautions for their own safety.

John not only rejected these demands, but swore furiously that he would never submit to such terms. 'Why,' said he, in bitter accents, 'why do they not 'demand my kingdom at once?' On learning that the king had so decided, the barons appointed Fitzwalter

their general. Northampton refused them admission; but Bedford gave them welcome, and London secretly invited them to make the capital the centre of operations. The pope censured all these proceedings. The barons paid little heed to his denunciations. They summoned all of their order who had not joined them to do so without delay, on pain of being accounted enemies to the liberties of the people, and to the peace of the kingdom.

The king saw himself miserably deserted. Seven attendants, some of whom were of doubtful fidelity, were all that remained with him in his retreat at Odiham. Great was his anger against the barons, ceaseless were his efforts to secure adherents, at any cost, or from any quarter. But his passion and his policy were alike fruitless. The nation was with the men in arms against him. He was compelled, accordingly, to give the barons a meeting, and to consider terms of agreement.

Magna Charta.

From Windsor Castle the king descended to a level meadow-land near Staines, known by the name of Running-mead, from a stream which passed through it. There the two parties encamped at a given distance. In the intervening space the deputies assembled, and conferences commenced, which lasted four days. At length the Great Charter received the royal signature; and the Tower and City of London were retained by the barons until twenty-five of their number should be appointed as guardians of the liberties of England, with power to levy war against the king, if necessary, for the maintenance of the said liberties.

As the grievances against which the provisions of the Great Charter were directed came largely from the feudal system, they were, of course, such as would naturally pass away with that system. But the redress, even in those cases, was sought on a principle possessing a permanent significance and value. That principle was, that there is a power in the subject

which may be legitimately exercised to impose restrictions on the power of the crown. Wardship, and other feudal usages, together with the abuses which grew up with them, have ceased; but the principle which curbed excesses in that day, has survived to check tendencies to excess in other forms, in the same quarter, to our own time.

The two grand provisions in every scheme of liberty, must have respect to the security of person and property. On the first of these points the Charter says—'No freeman's body shall be taken, nor imprisoned, 'nor disseised, nor outlawed, nor banished, nor in any 'ways be damaged, nor shall the king send him to 'prison by force, except by the judgment of his peers, 'and by the law of the land.' On the second point, the language of this memorable document is—'No 'scutage nor aid shall be imposed on the kingdom, 'except by the common council of the kingdom; unless 'it be to redeem the king's body, to make his eldest 'son a knight, and once to marry his eldest daughter; 'and that to be a reasonable aid; and in like manner 'shall it be concerning the *Tallage* and aids of the city 'of London; and of other cities which from this time 'shall have their liberties; and that the city of London shall fully have all its liberties and free customs, 'as well by land as by water.' The Great Charter, accordingly, was a solemn protest against the evil of arbitrary arrests and arbitrary taxation. It placed the law as a fence about the person of the subject; and in regard to taxation, it placed the authority of the 'common council of the kingdom,' abreast with the authority of the king.

It is true, the Charter restricted this parliamentary authority to those who were the direct tenants of the crown—that is, to the aristocracy. But it made the suffrage of that assembly indispensable to the action of the crown in all matters of taxation; and provided, moreover, for its being at all times duly and

legally convened. It is in the very next reign, that the word parliament comes to be understood as including a house of commons.

It is true, also, that the provisions of the Great Charter did not descend more than indirectly and partially to the lowest class—the non-franchised of those days. But even the 'villein,' often little above the serf, was not to be distrained of his 'waggonage.'* And it is no small matter to find these haughty barons stipulating that there shall be 'no sale, no delay, no denial 'of justice' in the case of the humblest freeman. This stipulation conferred a benefit of much value on a large portion of the Saxon population of those times. Its tendency was to put the law in the place of the lawlessness both of the king and of the noble. It should always be remembered, that the barons surrendered much themselves, in calling upon the king to make this surrender. Many evils of that time were thus abated or abolished, and many principles were avowed or assumed which were to be applied in after times upon a scale never suspected by those who had evoked them. The seeds were there, the vegetation and the growth would come in its season. Magna Charta and the Charta De Foresta, says Sir Edward Coke, 'have been confirmed, established, and commanded to 'be put in execution by thirty-two several acts of Par-'liament.' So unwelcome had these concessions been to the crown, so precious were they in the estimation of the people. Of all the evils introduced by the Normans, the most arbitrary and pitiless were the forest

* 'A freeman shall not be amerced for a small offence, but only according to the degree of the offence; and for a greater delinquency, according to the magnitude of his delinquency, saving his contenement; a merchant shall be amerced in the same manner, saving his merchandize; and a villein shall be amerced after the same manner, saving to him his wainage: and none of the aforesaid amercements shall be assessed, but by the oath of honest and lawful men of the vicinage.'—c. xv.

laws. The penalties of those laws no longer extended to life or limb.*

So great, on the whole, was the change—the *Revolution* in Government—which the lapse of a century and a half from the Conquest had sufficed to bring about.

* In our statutes, Magna Charta is printed as a law of the ninth year of Henry III. But it is in fact a transcript from the Parliament roll of 25 Edw. I.—Barrington's *Observations on the Statutes.* The Charter consisted properly of two documents—the Great Charter, and the Charter of the Forests. Both were confirmed by Edward in the year above mentioned. It is remarkable that our great law writers, Bracton, Fleta, and Briton, who became conspicuous in the age following that of the Great Charter, make little use of that document. Was it that even such men were not fully alive to the acquisition that had been made; or was it that to them, as lawyers, popular liberty was a subject of less interest than scientific law?

CHAPTER V.

THE CONQUEST IN ITS RELATION TO THE CHURCH.

Origin of the spiritual courts.

TWO changes materially affecting the character of the Anglo-Saxon church took place soon after the Conquest. William substituted Normans for Saxons, in the manner described, in the chief bishoprics and abbeys. He also instituted the tribunals since known in our history under the name of the spiritual courts. Among the Anglo-Saxons the clergy and laity acted very much together, both in the making of law and in its administration. Thanes and ecclesiastics sat on the same bench, not only in the Witanagemote, but in the County Court. But on the Continent, the clergy had long been in possession of their separate ecclesiastical courts, distinct from the courts of the laity. As the objects of which those separate courts professed to take cognizance were such only as related to the cure of souls, it was not unnatural that the great law in such courts should be the canon law. But inasmuch as human responsibility has to do, not only with everything directly religious, but with everything moral, it would not be difficult to attract to such tribunals a multitude of cases not at first contemplated as belonging to them. Marriages, wills, and a host of questions resulting from them, or resembling them, were claimed as questions proper to be determined by this spiritual authority. And as the law of these courts was a distinct law, and as the men who administered it became a distinct order of judges, it seemed only a fitting sequence to such a policy, that the clergy should account themselves as not amenable, in any circumstances, to the tribunals of the laity. Such a subjection of the spiritual to the

worldly, it was maintained, must be a subjection of the greater to the less. The Conqueror was far from meaning that the clergy should carry their notions to such lengths. He wished to purchase their attachment, and to use them as a counterpoise to the undue influence of his nobles. But they were not to be bribed. They clung to the independent power thus ceded to them. So William laid up stores of vexation for those who should come after him.*

Transubstantiation —and celibacy of the clergy.

Two other changes in relation to the English church, scarcely less considerable than those above named, belong to this period. The doctrine of transubstantiation was now to become an acknowledged dogma with the English clergy, and vigorous efforts were to be made to enforce upon them the law of celibacy. The tendency of both these movements was manifestly towards the increase of clerical power. In the eucharist, according to the doctrine of transubstantiation, the humblest priest was supposed to achieve the

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* Seldeni *Analect.* 130. *Notæ Eadmer.* 168, 187. Wilkins's *Concilia*, i. 199. Reeve's *Hist. of Eng. Law*, i. c. 2. The language of the ordinance issued by the Conqueror is as follows: 'That no bishop nor archdeacon shall henceforth hold place *de legibus episcopalibus* in the Hundred court, nor submit to the judgment of secular persons any cause which relates to the cure of souls: but that whosoever is proceeded against for any cause or offence, according to the episcopal law, shall resort to some place which the bishop shall appoint, and there answer to the charge, and do what is right towards God and the bishop, not according to the law used in the Hundred court, but according to the canons and the episcopal law.'

Giannone, in his *Civil History of Naples*, has given a summary of the pretexts of the clergy in making these encroachments. 'All appeals,' says the historian, 'being carried to Rome, care was taken to enlarge the jurisdiction of the episcopal court, and to extend the cognizance of the ecclesiastical judges over more persons and more causes, so that little was left to the secular magistrates to trouble themselves about. However, Frederic II., not willing to see some enormous crimes of the clergy go unpunished, was wont frequently to chastise them; but Clement, in the conditions of the investiture granted to Charles, would have it stipulated *that the clergy should not be sued before a secular judge either in civil or criminal cases*, except in those which concerned fiefs.'—Bk. xix. § 3.

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greatest of miracles. In the vow of celibacy, relation to the church was accepted in place of all family relations, and in precedence of all imaginable relations. Every priest, according to the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the elaborated sacramental theory to which that doctrine gave such terrible completeness, became a functionary possessed of power the most mysterious and unlimited; and it was only consistent that men supposed to be possessed of authority so extraordinary, should be separated from ordinary men by some strong lines of demarcation. Not that the body of the clergy were hypocrites in professing to regard the doctrine of transubstantiation as a doctrine essential to salvation, and the law of celibacy as a pure and Christian law for the priesthood. Far from it. Had not their belief on these points been general and sincere, ambitious men could not have used them so effectually to the purposes to which they were applied. In ecclesiastical history, the policy of the few becomes strong, only too commonly, through the fanaticism of the many. By such means, the clergy of every nation in Europe became one body, as no other class of men had ever become. The young became their spiritual offspring in baptism, and the life so imparted ceased not to be dependent on their services until the extreme unction, or final absolution, gave it perfectness. On this ground, they claimed to be accepted as the fatherhood of Christendom. Nations were composed of their children. Kings owed them a filial reverence and submission. This was the advanced ground to which clerical pretension had attained in the eleventh century. It was pretension resting professedly on a mysterious and spiritual basis, but used to a large extent to ends which were not spiritual

Lanfranc.

Lanfranc, whose name is so conspicuous in this portion of our history, was a native of Lombardy. His family was of senatorial rank. Having studied assiduously at Pavia, he became distinguished by his knowledge of law, and by his efforts as an advocate

and a teacher. In 1040, from some unknown cause, he migrated, with a considerable number of his pupils, into Normandy, and settled as a teacher at Avranches. His power of acquisition, and his general capacity, were of a high order. His taste for learning disqualified him for seeking distinction in military life, and the church, in consequence, presented the only channel through which success, in the measure of his ambition, could be realized. In 1042, when forty years of age, he relinquished his vocation as a lay teacher at Avranches, and became a monk in the poor abbey of Bec. The abbey was a very recent, as well as a very poor foundation, and the monks, who seem to have been as vulgar as they were poor, are said to have looked on the brother who was so much in advance of them with great jealousy. But Lanfranc brought reputation to the abbey, both by the strictness of his life, and by his learning, and rather than lose the advantage of his residence, the fraternity were at length disposed to make him their abbot. When invited to become archbishop of Canterbury, Lanfranc had been for some time abbot of Caen, and must have been in an advanced age. As archbishop, he spared no pains to assimilate the English church in all things to the Roman, as the Roman church then stood.* Everything commemorative of Anglo-Saxon piety tended to nourish Anglo-Saxon patriotism, and on that ground was disparaged by the Anglo-Normans. Lanfranc participated in this feeling. He spoke with contempt of the learning, and piety, and customs of the English, even of their saints and martyrs. But in truth, though the name of Lanfranc has descended to us almost without reproach, we feel bound to say that his worldly wisdom seems to have been greatly in advance of his piety; and that the

* In a letter to pope Alexander, dated 1072, he addresses the pontiff as the person to whom the holy church throughout the whole world has been assuredly committed.—Wilkins, *Concilia*, i. 326.

facts of his history, as a whole, force upon us the impression, that he could descend to artifice, not to say craft, to accomplish his purpose, and that his inordinate ambition is as little to be doubted as his knowledge and sagacity. When the marriage of William and Matilda was contemplated, Lanfranc opposed it as unlawful, but he afterwards won the favour of the duke by preparing the way for that event. At one time, he saw the doctrine of the eucharist very much as Berengarius saw it; but he subsequently distinguished himself as the great antagonist of his former friend on that point. When invited to become archbishop of Canterbury, he delivered all sorts of protests against the appointment; but, as primate of the English church, he was not prepared to relinquish a vestige of the rights or emoluments of that position. All this, and more, may admit of satisfactory explanations, but the explanations are not given.*

The doctrine of transubstantiation becomes the doctrine of the church of England.

Before the time of Lanfranc, the doctrine of transubstantiation was a sort of ultramontane doctrine, which had not been more than partially received in Europe. The Anglo-Saxon clergy knew nothing of the word transubstantiation, and if they knew anything of the dogma afterwards denoted by that word, that dogma had not a place among the acknowledged doctrines of their own church.

Elfric, a contemporary of St. Dunstan, and an ecclesiastic of much celebrity in his time, has spoken in some of his epistles concerning the nature of the eucharist in a manner which repudiates incidentally, but most distinctly, the ideas regarding it which became subsequently the generally acknowledged doctrine of the church. This letter was addressed to Wulfstan, archbishop of York; and as its translation into the vernacular language was in obedience to the request of that prelate, the document must be admitted to be

* Lanfranci *Opera. Vita Lanf.* Ordericus, lib. iv. Malmes. *de Reg.* lib. i.

of no mean authority. According to this writer, the 'housel (host) is Christ's body, not bodily, but 'spiritually. Not the body which He suffered in, but 'the body of which He spake when He blessed the 'bread and wine, a night before his sufferings. The 'apostle,' he observes, 'has said of the Hebrews, that 'they did all eat of the same ghostly meat, and they 'all did drink of the same ghostly drink. And this, 'he said, not bodily, but ghostly, Christ being not 'yet born, nor his blood shed, when that the people 'of Israël ate that meat, and drank of that stone. 'And the stone was not (a stone) bodily, though 'he said so. It was the same mystery in the old law, 'and they did ghostly signify that Gospel housel of 'our Saviour's body which we consecrate now.'

In a homily by this same Elfric, appointed to be read to the people in the language spoken by them, the good abbot repeats the doctrine of the above passage, in many forms, and with illustrations that could hardly be mistaken, the substance being, that nothing in this service was to be understood bodily (or literally), 'but that all was to be understood ghostly (spiritually).' Lanfranc's zeal in support of the new doctrine was only in harmony with his general policy.

The celibacy of the clergy, as we have intimated, was an article of discipline to which the church of Rome attached great importance at this juncture. To put an end to the contrary practice was one of the great reforms to which Gregory VII. had applied himself with the sagacity and energy which had distinguished his pontificate. In the scheme of this pontiff, every primate of a kingdom was, or ought to be, the most kingly person in it. While to himself it pertained to be the king of all kings, in things spiritual and temporal, every crown, being properly in his view, a fief holden from his crown. In pursuance of this theory, he called on the Conqueror to render feudal and filial homage to him for the kingdom of England. The answer of William was

a blunt rebuke, which prevented any repetition of that claim in his time.* But, as we have stated, the clergy could not be expected to be duly subservient to this scheme so long as they were allowed to marry, and to be connected by so many natural sympathies with the secular communities around them.

Proceedings against the married clergy.

In a council convened in Winchester, over which Lanfranc presided, it was resolved that such of the clergy as were then married should be allowed to retain their wives; but the unmarried were forbidden to marry, and the bishops in future were not to ordain any man who had a wife.† The above concession in favour of the married clergy suggests that they must then have formed a numerous class. In a council assembled in Westminster in 1102, over which Anselm presided, a canon was adopted which enjoined celibacy on the clergy in the most absolute terms, requiring the married priests to put away their wives. Six years later, at a council in London, in which the king and the nobility, as well as the prelates, were present, laws still more severe were passed on this subject. The priests and their wives who continued together were declared guilty of adultery, excommunicated, and whatever they possessed was pronounced a forfeiture to the bishop of the diocese.‡ So the principle gradually gained ground, and it was steadily insisted on, until the usage of the English church became conformable in this respect to the usage which had become general. Of course, in this protracted and bitter controversy—for such it everywhere proved to be,—the zealous churchmen of the age assigned all sorts of reasons in aid of their policy, rather than the great reason by which the more sagacious of them appear to have been influenced. With some this supposed purity of the ministers of religion was no doubt

* Seldeni *Notæ ad Eadmer.* 104.—Dupin, *Cent. XI.* c. 5.
† Spelman, *Concil.* ii. 13.
‡ Ibid. ii. 23, 29; Wilkins, *Concil.* i. 338; Eadmer, 91, 94.

viewed as indispensable to the purity of everything belonging to their office. But others were less simple-minded, and flattered themselves that church power would be safe in the measure in which it should be made to be the one object of life with the churchman.

Lanfranc died in 1089, two years after the accession of William Rufus. William kept the see of Canterbury vacant for several years, in common with many other sees and abbeys, simply that he might appropriate their revenues to his own uses. But early in 1093 the king became dangerously ill, his conscience became alarmed, and measures were taken by his order to fill up the ecclesiastical vacancies. The see of Canterbury again passed into the hands of an Italian, in the person of Anselm, a native of Aosta in Piedmont.

Anselm.

Anselm was then about sixty years of age. He had been a monk in the abbey of Bec, the friend of Lanfranc, and his coadjutor in his labours as a teacher. After the removal of Lanfranc from Bec, Anselm became abbot. To much of the literary fame of his predecessor, he added a higher reputation for sanctity; and as a theologian. He expressed himself as most unwilling to accept the new dignity proffered to him. He told his friends that he saw little but discord as likely to arise between himself and the king. Nor did it require any great penetration to see the probabilities of the future in that light. The temper of the king was arbitrary, violent, and rapacious. Anselm was not covetous, nor in the ordinary sense worldly, but he was bent on extending and augmenting the privileges of his order—the power and grandeur of the hierarchy. In Lanfranc there was much of the broad and flexible intelligence which belongs to the man of the world. He was both scholar and statesman, one of a large class of men who attained to this double eminence during the Middle Age. But Anselm was a man of a more scholastic intellect, more of a devotee, and, from his narrower range of thought, more con-

scientious, and more obstinate. As commonly happened with men of his description, the authority which he seemed most reluctant to accept, was an authority of which he was to the last degree jealous, and by no means disposed to resign, when it had once been assumed.

Dispute between Anselm and William Rufus.

It is not improbable that Anselm had enemies near the person of the king. Between the men about William Rufus, and the new archbishop, there could be little in common. The first complaint of the king was, that the heriot paid by the primate—the fine to the crown on the introduction to a new fief—was not of the proper amount. But his anger became great, when he learnt that Anselm had presumed, on his own authority, to acknowledge the claims of pope Urban II. in preference to those of his rival. The king insisted that on all such questions it became the primate to wait for the judgment of his sovereign, and to conform himself to that judgment when given. It had been provided by the Conqueror that the clergy should not acknowledge any pope but with his permission; that they should not publish any letters from Rome until approved by him; that they should not hold any council, or pass any canons, without his consent; that they should not pronounce a sentence of excommunication on any of his nobles but with his sanction; and that no ecclesiastic should leave the kingdom at his own pleasure.* Anselm could assent to no such doctrine; and was a man, in consequence, who should never have become archbishop of Canterbury. Even that office, which he himself had received from the king, was not valid, in his view, until confirmed by the approval of the pope. The king, and the great majority of the English prelates, declared against the claims of Urban II., and thus the embroilment seemed to become hopeless. Not long afterwards, however, the king surprised Anselm by de-

* Eadmer, 6; Seldeni *Notæ ad Eadmer.* 104. Wilkins, *Concilia*, i. 199.

claring himself favourable to the claims of Urban, and by stating that the pallium for his use as archbishop had been sent by his holiness. In these circumstances the primate found himself obliged to accept of that mark of papal recognition from the hands of the king, in place of receiving it, as he had hoped, from the hands of the pope, as the supreme pastor, in person.*

But the peace which seemed to be thus restored was not of long continuance. In the following year the king charged the primate with having endangered the interests of the state by sending a less number of retainers to the aid of the crown, in a military exigency, than the crown was entitled to expect. In this affair the ill mood of the king was not more conspicuous than the pride of the archbishop. Anselm sought, and at length obtained, permission to leave the kingdom. This was in 1097, and the archbishop continued an exile, in France or Italy, until the sudden death of the king, in 1100.†

Accession of Henry I.

According to the law of succession, Robert should have succeeded to his brother William. But at the moment when the throne became vacant, Robert was at a distance with the Crusaders, and his place was seized by his younger brother Henry. It became Henry, in these circumstances, to be mindful of everything that might tend to conciliate the nation, and especially the clergy. He removed some obnoxious officers; put an end to many irritating oppressions; bound himself at his coronation by the oath of the Anglo-Saxon kings; and recalling Anselm from exile, received him with every mark of respect and favour.‡

Dispute concerning investitures.

But a few days only after the arrival of the primate there were signs of an approaching storm. Henry called on the archbishop to render homage to him in

* Eadmer, 23–31. Malms. *de Pontif.* 124, 125. *Anglia Sacra*, i. 164.

† Eadmer, 37 et seq. ‡ Ibid. 56.

the usual form, by accepting the ring and crosier from his hands, as the symbols of his investiture with the rank and temporalities of his see by the crown. Anselm, in place of complying with this demand, declined to do so in the most explicit terms—referring the king to the decree of a council assembled in Rome the year before, which declared, that any layman conferring investiture in that manner, and any priest accepting it, should by so doing incur the sentence of excommunication.* Henry of course felt, that what a number of ecclesiastics at Rome might exact, even with the pope at their head, and what it might become him as king of England to acknowledge, were very different things.†

But the controversy which grew up in this way, between Anselm and Henry, had become a European controversy. It had provoked the most angry discussions, especially in Germany, where circumstances seemed to point to the emperor as the most fitting person to sustain the rights of the civil power against this new form of assault upon it. The ceremony itself in this case was clearly a very trivial matter, but the interpretation put upon it by the court of Rome, and the uses to which it might be applied, were not trivial.

The manner in which the popes had acquired their supposed right to interfere in the affairs of national churches is a story which spreads itself over the history of centuries. From the fourth century downwards, every opportunity was seized to add to the number of precedents in favour of such interventions,

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* Eadmer, 56. Wilkins, *Concilia*, i. 379–382. Pope Paschal instructed Anselm to excommunicate all persons, bishops or laymen, who should presume to act upon the king's views on this question.—Ibid.

† Paschal complained bitterly to Henry, that even the nuncios of the apostolic see were not allowed to enter England without a royal warrant, and that cases of appeal to Rome from the English clergy had ceased. Henry proceeds so far as to counsel the pope to be more moderate, lest his children should lose patience, and be found to withdraw themselves from his obedience.

and a precedent once gained was never forgotten. The history of the Anglo-Saxon church, in common with that of nearly all churches, had furnished its share of convenient examples. The mission of Augustine and his monks originated with pope Gregory, and that pontiff had naturally much to do with the early history of Christianity in this country. Subsequently, Theodore, a monk of Tarsus, was received as archbishop of Canterbury, on the recommendation of the pope. Wilfrid, by his several appeals to Rome, of which mention has been made, did much to make the idea of its appellant jurisdiction and spiritual sovereignty familiar to the mind of the English. The many English kings, moreover, who went on pilgrimage to the supposed shrines of the apostles in the Eternal City, contributed in so doing towards laying a foundation for the extravagant claims of the papacy which followed. The ecclesiastical customs of Europe all drifted in the same direction.

So elated did the papacy become by these signs of its growing power, that before the close of the eleventh century the pontiffs aspired, as we have seen, not only to the place of kings, but claimed to be possessed of a dignity higher than any imaginable on earth. It is at the same time clear that the man affecting to be possessed of such a sovereignty must have subjects, powerful subjects, obedient subjects, and many of them. To gain such subjects the aspirant must have official rank to confer, large wealth to distribute. The patrimony of the successor of St. Peter, in the meanwhile, is very small. Hence, if rank and wealth are to be at the disposal of the pope on a large scale, the rank and wealth must come from the different national churches which profess submission to his rule. But how may the requisite hold on such possessions be secured?

The reasoning of the far-seeing Gregory VII. was, that the offices of metropolitans, bishops, and abbots, the great prizes of the church, being all spiritual

offices, are such as should not, from their nature, be supposed to be conferred, in any sense, by the temporal prince. The pontiff is the spiritual head of Christendom. From him alone can the right to exercise spiritual functions proceed. But this custom of receiving the ring and crosier from the hands of a layman, is manifestly a receiving of the emblems of spiritual office from hands not spiritual. This unseemly usage should be suppressed. This accomplished, something more than a veto on all such appointments will accrue to the Roman see. The initiative in the filling up of such vacancies will then naturally belong to the pontiff, or, at least, such a proceeding on his part will be seen to be only consistent with the position ceded to him. Under the shelter of this plea men may be largely introduced into such influential positions, as a reward for services to the apostolic see, or with the understanding that such services are to be rendered. The prince may be left to require homage after the ordinary feudal manner, for the temporalities held from him, but the investiture with office by means of the ring and crosier being once surrendered as belonging to the papacy, and not to any temporal power, a key to the wealth of every national church in Christendom will be in great part secured.

The reader will see that in this controversy the spiritual claims of the papacy are so used as to serve ends of no very spiritual description. How far Anselm saw the extent in which the priestly served as a covert for the worldly in these discussions we know not. But nothing could exceed the obstinacy with which he laboured to uphold the pretensions of his order. During the next six years, the question at issue between the king of England and the archbishop of Canterbury, was argued several times, on either side, in Rome. Anselm made a journey thither to urge his own suit in person. But on all these occasions the right of the king to grant investiture was

repudiated and condemned. The utmost that could at length be obtained was, that on condition of the king's consenting to abstain from this ceremony in future, the archbishop would forthwith remove the sentence of excommunication from all persons who had incurred that censure during these disputes; that he would also consecrate certain prelates and abbots whom he had hitherto refused to consecrate; and that in all future elections of bishops and abbots, the rights of the king in relation to the temporalities of the benefice should be secured by homage, but not in the way of investiture by the use of the ring and crosier.*

Settlement of the dispute concerning investitures, and what followed.

Henry's patience had been exhausted by these contentions. In accepting these terms, he must have known that he had virtually ceded the point at issue. But he persuaded himself that the concession made concerning his right in relation to the temporalities was not without its value, and on these conditions accordingly peace was concluded. It was quite true that nomination to a vacant bishopric could be of small value to the person nominated without the sanction of the king, who could alone confer the temporalities; but it was no less true that there could be no bishop at all, no consecration at all, without the sanction of the pope, from whom alone, according to the admitted theory, spiritual office could proceed. The court of Rome had so far succeeded, as to become possessed of a pretext which was sufficient to secure many of the best appointments in the English church, from time to time, to its instruments. For, as may be supposed, the plea used to justify interference with the disposal of bishopries, was soon used to justify interference with the disposal of benefices of less value. From this time to the time of the Reformation, the remonstrances called forth by encroachments of this nature are almost incessant in our history.

* Eadmer, 53–91. Spelman, *Concil.* ii. 27. *Acta Conciliorum*, Labbe, tom. vi. ed. Harduin.

Exemption of religious houses.

Another feature of change in the ecclesiastical affairs of England during this interval, consisted in the attempts made by some of the religious houses to place themselves under the immediate jurisdiction of the see of Rome, securing by that means exemption from the jurisdiction of the English bishops. As these monastic brotherhoods were British subjects, and as their wealth was British wealth, great resistance was made to this innovation. But the resistance was not successful. The legatine authority in England, and the custom of appeals to Rome, had come to be so familiar to all men, that the distance between the Thames and the Tiber seemed to have been greatly diminished. The distance, however, was what it had always been, and the exempt monks, we have reason to fear, were often only too mindful of the fact, that the greater the distance between themselves and their superior, the greater would be their licence. Rome, on the other hand, was equally aware, that the effect of this custom would be to furnish a new pretext for a large meddling with English affairs. Many abbeys were in this manner declared independent. Great privileges were conferred on them. But it was notorious that all these privileges were matters of purchase. The court where the purchases were made had become the most venal in Europe. In process of time, however, it was discovered that the rule of the king and of the bishops might be in many respects less exacting and galling than that of the foreign court, and the tendency of such a discovery was to check this form of mischief. It should be added, that our kings sometimes took precedence of the pontiffs in conferring the exemption from episcopal oversight on monasteries. It was thus that some of the heads of those establishments rose to the dignity of mitred abbots.*

* Matt. Paris, *Vit. Abbat.* 46 et seq. Spelman, *Concil.* ii. 53–58. Petr. Bless. ep. 68. *Chronicle of Battle Abbey.*

Thomas à Becket.

The reign of Henry II. extends from 1145 to 1189. Of this interval the space from 1161 to 1170 was chiefly occupied in the struggle between this monarch and Thomas à Becket. The history of this extraordinary man is illustrative in many respects of his age. As we descend in our annals to the times of the Anglo-Normans, the materials of history become much more ample. Some of the most valuable of these contributions consist in the lives of distinguished men. But the men whose career is thus made known to us are mostly churchmen, and their actions, reported for the most part by admirers and partisans, are so overlaid with fiction and eulogy, as to render it necessary that some pains should be taken to distinguish between the invented and the probable. Becket is one of the men whose history has been written by writers of his own time, and in this spirit.*

Following our guides on this subject discreetly, we may venture to say that Becket was the son of a London citizen in good circumstances; that his mother was believed to be a woman of Saracen birth; that young Becket's studies in London and Oxford were not very efficiently prosecuted; that he was early distinguished, not as a man of learning, but as a person of great natural talent, and most agreeable manners; that the favour he acquired with Theobald archbishop of Canterbury, led to his being sent on an ecclesiastical negotiation to Rome; that he acquitted himself in that capacity successfully, and was rewarded with the richest parsonage in England; that his views expanded with his success; that he afterwards studied civil law at Bologna and Auxerre; that on his return he was introduced to the king, became chancellor, and rose so high in the royal esteem by the ability which he brought to that office, and by the charm of his companionship, that Henry and Becket grew to be on

* Becket had specially four biographers, Gervase, Fitzstephen, Robert de Monte, and Hoveden.

such terms of intimacy as rarely take place between sovereign and subject; that the sumptuousness and splendour of the chancellor's establishment were such as had not hitherto been seen in any subject of the British crown; that in his embassy to Paris to conduct negotiations for a royal marriage, his pageantries were the wonder of all who gazed upon them; and that in this manner of life he continued until some way past forty years of age—a man more at home in hunting and hawking, in business of state, and even in the encounters of knighthood, than in the modest duties of a clergyman.

It is at this stage in Becket's career that the see of Canterbury becomes vacant, and, to the amazement of everybody, the king recommends his chancellor as the most fitting man to be placed at the head of the English church. The clergy oppose the nomination as unsuitable—as scarcely decent. But, after the delay of some thirteen months, Becket is duly consecrated. The secret of this proceeding no doubt was, that Henry had good reason to expect that Becket would be found as subservient to his wishes in relation to the church, as he had been in relation to the state. Already, the chancellor had gone far enough in support of the king's policy to warrant this expectation.* But when the ecclesiastical sovereignty of England—for in such light the primacy was viewed—came within the sight of the chancellor, a change passed over the entire complexion of his thoughts and purposes. During the twelve months and more, indeed, which intervened between his nomination by the king, and his consecration, this change of spirit and intention is reserved as a secret to his own bosom. But the crosier once in his hand, it became to him as the sceptre of a spiritual kingdom, and, inasmuch as the superstitions

* Stephan. 23. Wilkins, *Concil.* i. 431. Lyttleton's *Henry II.* iii. 24. Petr. Bless. ep. 49. Turner's *Hist.* i. 237.

of the age could alone give strength to a sovereignty of that order, he resolved to avail himself to the uttermost of power in that form. Securely inducted, he is the gay chancellor no longer. He is no more seen at the head of his festive board. He is no more the chief figure in a state pageant which is to fill even the court of Paris with wonder. He takes to sackcloth, and even that is allowed to be peopled with vermin. The water he drinks is made nauseous by infusions of fennel. He washes the feet of poor men daily in his cell, and sends them away with his blessing and with money. He exposes his back to stripes. He affects to be a devout reader of the Holy Scriptures. He is supposed to be much in prayer. He wanders about in gloomy cloisters, musing and in tears. He diffuses his charities everywhere around him. But when he ministers at the altar, his coarse and filthy underclothing is covered with the most splendid vestments.*

Had Becket been a young man, with a character only partially developed, it might have been less difficult to look on this change as sincere. Or had he been a weak man, liable to have been carried away by an ill-regulated imagination, sensibility, and conscientiousness, belief in his honest intentions would have been possible. Or had this great apparent revolution in character been followed, as in the case of the ex-chancellor Turketel, by a life of unostentatious lowliness and piety, a charitable judgment of the phenomenon might have been admissible.† But Becket, as

* Steph. 24, 25.

† Turketel, if we may credit the account that has reached us concerning him, was a churchman who sustained the office of chancellor under Athelstan, Edmund, and Eldred, and had been engaged in the military as well as in the civil affairs of his time. In the midst of his popularity and power he suddenly retired to the ruined abbey of Croyland, restored it, endowed it, and then passed nearly thirty years of his life in the humble and useful discharge of his duties as abbot.—Ingulf. 25–52.

we have said, was now more than forty years of age. He was anything but a weak man. From this time, moreover, he never failed to give proof of being, as he had always been, one of the most haughty and ambitious men of his age. Change of *object* there was, but we see no change of *character*. By whatever sophistries Becket may have imposed upon himself, it is manifest that ambition lay at the basis of his proceedings. The aim of that ambition was nothing less than to be as great a man as the king of England himself.

The first step of the archbishop, in pursuance of his new policy, was to resign his chancellorship. This was an office commonly filled in those days by a churchman. Henry could hardly fail to interpret this change as ominous of more. He was much displeased, and as the reason assigned by the primate was, that his episcopal duties were more than he could hope faithfully to discharge, Henry called upon him to resign his archdeaconry and his parsonage. It was assumed that an ecclesiastic with so tender a conscience could never wish to be in any sense a pluralist. Becket had not expected such a move. He was by no means disposed to be obedient. But the will of the king was unalterable. The flattering reception subsequently given to Becket by the pope at Tours came as oil on the flame of his ambition. On his return, he provoked great hostility by reviving some old claims to properties said to belong to the see of Canterbury, but which had passed long since into other hands. The king was called upon to resign to the archbishop the town and castle of Rochester; and the earl of Clare was summoned to surrender the castle of Tonbridge into his hands. Some lord had refused to admit a priest of the primate's nomination to a living. Becket excommunicated him. Henry remonstrated, but was haughtily informed that it did not belong to the king to say who should be visited with church censure or who should be absolved.*

* *Diceto*, 563. Gervase, *Act. Pont.* 1670. Stephan. 25. *Quadril.*

Constitutions of Clarendon.

The grand strife, however, began when Henry, with the consent of his barons, proposed his scheme for placing the ecclesiastical affairs of the country on a more satisfactory basis in relation to the crown. This scheme is contained in certain canons known in our history under the name of the Constitutions of Clarendon. The design of these constitutions was to subject the clergy, on all questions relating to temporal matters, and concerning the interests of the laity, to the authority of the crown. The clergyman charged with a criminal offence might be tried in the bishop's court, but it must be with the cognizance of the king's court; and should the accused be found guilty, it was required that he should be delivered to the magistrate, to be punished as though he were a layman. Becket insisted, that degradation from office was a sufficient punishment in all such cases. Another constitution prohibited all appeals to Rome without the consent of the king; another required that no dignified clergyman should leave the kingdom without the king's licence; and another declared that no tenant-in-chief of the crown, no officer of the king's household, or belonging to his demesne, should be excommunicated, or should have his lands laid under an interdict, without the king's knowledge and approval. These regulations sufficiently indicate the spirit and purpose of the king and his barons.*

In the check thus laid on the assumptions of the clergy, no more was attempted than had been done by the Conqueror, when Hildebrand himself was on the throne. Nor was anything further from the intention of William than that clergymen, while excluded from the administration of secular law, should not themselves be subject to it. But if William I. had his reasons for taking this course, experience since that time had given Henry II. much more weighty reasons for adhering to it. Anselm had shown, how a primate of

* Wilkins's *Concilia*, i. 435.

the English church might use the authority of the papacy to contravene and humble the authority of the crown. The clergy, moreover, in this later period, had come to be so numerous, and were many of them so homeless, that, according to the most credible testimony, a large portion of the crime of the country was known to have been perpetrated by them, and perpetrated for the greater part with impunity, inasmuch as the delinquent ecclesiastic claimed to be amenable only to the tribunals of his order.*

Grounds and object of the king's policy.

Nothing was more natural than that the court of Rome should be opposed to the Constitutions of Clarendon. Wide was the distance between the position of national churches as defined by those constitutions, and as presented in the scheme of Hildebrand. Much has been written on this controversy between Becket and his sovereign, but nothing that has seemed to us fairly to apprehend the points really at issue.

It may seem harsh for a layman, even in the person of a king, to attempt to give law to a churchman in the administration of church censures—and the king did say to the primate, you shall not excommunicate any of my nobles without my consent. But there was a reason for this interference. Why were not churchmen content with having what were called spiritual censures simply spiritual? Why were they so eager to connect civil penalties with such censures, so as thereby to reduce the excommunicated man to the condition of an outlaw? If the aid of the magistrate is to be invoked, that every sentence of this nature may be as much temporal as spiritual, is it very unreasonable that the civil power should claim to have something to do with the proceedings of the

* *Acta Concil.* Labbe, vi. 1603, 1604. Herib. 22. Steph. 33. The king was assured by his judges that more than a hundred homicides had been committed by clergymen during the first ten years of his reign, lesser offences being of course much more frequent.—Guil. Newbrig. lib. ii. c. 16.

courts whence such sentences are issued? It should be seen at a glance, that it was the temporal consequences allied with such censures that made the interference of the temporal authority, not only reasonable, but imperative, if the temporal interests of the community were to be secure. In like manner, the law which required that the king should be cognizant of all communications between the clergy and the court of Rome, was based on the fact that the censures and interdicts issued by that power were of a nature to disturb, not only the ecclesiastical, but all the civil relations of the kingdoms where they were introduced. So, likewise, the temporalities in the keeping of the crown, became the ground of its claim in regard to investitures. It was in the option of the clergy to relinquish those temporalities, and having so done, to claim independence of all secular interference with the election of churchmen to their spiritual office. But to take such a course was far from their thoughts. It is not too much to say that their policy in relation to civil power was uniformly, to become strong, in every possible way, by its means, and never to become weak by dividing authority with it, except when unavoidable.

One of the best informed among living writers on English history, has compared the conduct of our kings, in claiming the right of investiture, to the conduct of a sovereign who should impose a mayor or a recorder on the city of London without the suffrage of its citizens.* But it is natural to ask—Did the ecclesiastics of the Middle Age oppose the nomination of bishops by the crown because they wished them to be chosen by the people? We all know they meant nothing of the kind. The question between the bearers of the 'two swords,' in those days, was not, who shall be free, but to which of us shall the place of precedence belong? Churchmen were always pleased when they

* Palgrave's *History of Normandy and England*, i. 111, 112.

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could call in the magistrate, always much displeased when they found that by so doing they had called in a master. This was the source of Becket's displeasure —of the vexed life he lived after he became primate. He would have accepted the magistrate as a coadjutor, but he was not prepared to acknowledge him as an equal, still less to bow to him as a superior, and the magistrate with whom he had to do was not prepared to enter into partnership with him on such terms. Social liberty is possible only as the civil power is supreme for civil purposes over all persons and causes whatsoever.

Progress of the dispute.

It happened while this dispute between Becket and Henry was in progress, that a priest in Worcester was charged with seducing a young woman, and with having murdered her father, because he had presumed to remonstrate. Becket would not suffer even this miscreant to be delivered to the king's justice.* He found, however, that this high-handed policy was not acceptable either to the court or the country. At length, he promised to assent to the new regulations. But when required to do so publicly and formally, to the surprise of all present, he refused. The indignation of the king and of the parliament was great. Prelates and knights entreated him to submit, and when persuasion had proved fruitless, the anger expressed, and the show of weapons, were such as to menace the life of the obnoxious primate. Becket promised his signature once more. On the morrow, when this should have been given, he again refused, and declared that he should remove his cause to the court of Rome.

Becket appeals to Rome.

The source of this last decision is not difficult to discover. Becket had accepted the office of primate, knowing the intentions of the king, and he was now using that office to frustrate those intentions. Enough had happened to show that so deep was Henry's sense

* Stephan. 33.

of injury, that no measure of concession in the future would now suffice to repair the mischiefs of the past. From this point, in consequence, the struggle became desperate—a struggle, not for compromise or adjustment, so much as for victory. Henry might rely on his kingly authority, on the loyalty of his barons, and on the adhesion of many of the clergy. Becket hoped to oppose to this power the religious prepossessions of the age, the spiritual thunders of the papacy, and the jealousies, possibly, of foreign courts.

So fixed and deep was the resentment of Henry, that more than one attempt of Becket to soften him had been repulsed. The impeachment of the archbishop which followed, in the parliament of Northampton, made it clear that the king meditated nothing less than his deposition. But the passions of Henry hurried him to excess. His proceedings began to bear the aspect of persecution. Becket knew that the scale was turning in his favour. In their perplexity the bishops had urged that the matter should be submitted to the judgment of the pope. Becket saw the advantage of this proposal, and appealed gladly from the judgment of the king, the parliament, and even of his own bishops, to the decision of the pontiff.*

His flight.

It was in disguise, and with much difficulty, that the primate now made his escape to the Continent. But the pope, to the great mortification of the fugitive, was not eager to espouse his cause. The pontiff knew that the antecedents of Becket were far from being in harmony with his present saintly pretensions. The issue of such a quarrel in such hands seemed doubtful. Much, too, there was, both in the position and in the personal character of the king of England, to constitute him a formidable antagonist. Hence, when Becket sent his deputies to Rome, praying that he might be allowed to appear before the pontiff in his

* *Acta Concil.* Labbe, vi. 1610, 1611. Gervase, *Chron.* 1386–1392. *Quadril.* 25–27. Stephanides, 35–38.

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own cause, to his surprise, his presence there was forbidden—lessons on moderation were read to him, and he was commended to the care of the abbot of Pontigny, that in the garb of a Cistercian monk he might conform for a time to the ascetic discipline of that order.

Apparent reconciliation between Henry and Becket.

After six years of exile, a hollow truce was concluded between Becket and Henry. This took place in Normandy. Becket suspected the king's sincerity, and his own restless passions had been rather embittered than softened by his years of exile and adversity.*

Becket's violent proceedings.

Much had been done during his absence, both by prelates and laymen, in defiance of his authority, and one of his first acts after his apparent restoration was to send into England a series of excommunications which he had obtained from Rome, against the parties who had thus offended him. On Christmas day he added other anathemas to these, reading them himself with great bitterness of emphasis from the cathedral pulpit. In these proceedings there was an open violation of some of the conditions of peace on which the king had insisted as indispensable. Henry was still in Normandy. But tidings of these things reached him, and led him to bewail aloud the life of inquietude to which he seemed to be doomed so long as this troubler of his dominions should be allowed to live. Certain of his attendants put their own construction on this language.

The Norman knights make their appearance in Canterbury.

Several knights secretly withdrew from the court, and reached Canterbury by different roads. Becket, if we may credit the accounts given by his partisans, faced the threatening aspect of these men unmoved—first in his own apartment, and afterwards in the cathedral. Their demand was that he should remove the sentences of excommunication which he had pronounced since his return on the bishops who had

* His letters show this: see passages from them in Turner's *Hist.* i. 260–266.

taken part with the king. This he sternly refused, except as they should promise that obedience to the determinations of the church which had hitherto been demanded from them in vain. The haughty tone and manner of this reply, and a rude thrust of one of the knights to a distance from his person, provoked the first blow. The wound inflicted by it was slight. But it was followed by a second, and a third, from other hands, and Becket lay a dead man at the foot of the altar.

Death of Becket.

We scarcely need remind the reader, how by reason of this foul deed Becket rose from his true level, as an ambitious ecclesiastic, to the fictitious rank of a saint and a martyr; and how amidst the storm of reprobation poured forth on the perpetrators of this deed, Henry was constrained to do a base penance at the tomb of his old antagonist.

Henry's humiliation.

Popular feeling, it is evident, was often in favour of Becket, especially towards the close of his career. If not more than half an Englishman, the feeling was that he was not a Norman. He was the first man not of that race who had risen to eminence and power since the Conquest, and his battle had been a battle with a proud Norman king. It is probable that these facts had some influence on the old Saxon feeling of the country, though Becket himself never appealed to any such feeling. The Saxons had seen the Normans use the English church to their own purposes, and it may not have been unpleasant to them to see retribution spring up from that quarter. It should be remembered also, that through the Middle Age, the influence of the clergy had been generally felt by the people to be favourable, in many ways, to an amelioration of their condition. With all their faults, the abbot and the bishop were, in general, better masters than the knight or the baron. It is true, in the Becket controversy, the bishops were mostly with the king; but the answer of the Saxon would be, that they were all alien bishops, and sycophants to the alien power which

Popular feeling in favour of Becket.

had advanced them. The most obvious source, however, of the popular sympathy in favour of Becket, is to be found in the superstition of the age.

Result of the controversy.

But in the person of Becket the last man of that description passed away from our history. The Wilfrids and Odos, the Dunstans and Anselms of the past, had prepared the way for the appearance of such a man; but such men are from this time men of the past. Our English kings have still to guard their rights against the encroachments of the papacy, but in England, the mitre does not again attempt to divide empire with the crown. Wolsey was the servant of his king. His ambition was that of a statesman. The policy of Laud was more priestly. But it was not disloyal. Its object was to exalt the power of the crown at the cost of the liberties of the people. Henry suspended his reforms, but the battle had been fought, and the victory proved in the end to have been won.

Change in the policy and influence of the papal court.

The ambition and venality of the court of Rome had become notorious to all men. Its anathemas had lost much of their power. Men began to breathe more freely. Every day, the natural sense of right in society, seemed to be growing stronger, and the ecclesiastical sophistries opposed to that feeling were becoming less available. The subsequent conduct of the papacy in exacting feudal homage from king John, and in condemning the Great Charter, and the men who had combined to secure it, deepened the disaffection towards that power. Its aims will soon cease to be those of a lofty ambition. Its love of money, and of the agreeable things which money may command, is about to become its master passion.

State of religion during this period.

Concerning the state of religion among the people, while such strifes were perpetuated by its ministers, we possess little direct information. The inferior class of the Saxon clergy who were allowed to retain their livings after the Conquest, would probably be assiduous in teaching and consoling their countrymen through the evil times that had come upon them.

But the Norman clergy, while possessed of all the places of influence, were ignorant of the language of the people, and could neither teach them themselves, nor know when they were taught by others. Nor was this incompetency of short duration. The foreigners were without affection, either for the people, or for the tongue spoken by them. When more than a hundred clergymen were believed to have been guilty of homicide within the space of ten years, the order must have sunk very low, and the religious feeling that could have tolerated such enormities must have been such as we can hardly imagine. If this was the state of affairs under such a king as Henry II., what must have been the condition of things under Stephen? We look back to the reigns of the Conqueror and Henry I. as intervals of comparative order. But these terms could be applied only partially to the reign of William; and in the reign of Henry, Anselm, pious as he no doubt was, had become too much committed to disputes with the king, to have time left in which to do much for the piety of the people. The fact that Henry II. should have deemed it advisable and safe to raise such a man as Becket to the primacy, suggests much concerning the religious ideas of the age—for even those who learnt to worship the archbishop as a saint and a martyr, were bound to confess that his sanctity must have come to him after his elevation, the evidence of its existence before that event being wholly wanting. In short, there is scarcely anything on the surface of ecclesiastical affairs through the whole of this period to lead us to think favourably of the piety that might be found beneath.

Nevertheless, we can believe that piety was there. The heart of man, and especially the heart of woman, will crave the religious in some form, and examples of the most unselfish virtue, and of sincere religious feeling, may often be found where the superficial least expect to find them. In such circumstances, a spiritual chemistry may be at work, sufficient to extract for

itself enough of nutriment to sustain a truly religious life, from the midst of elements which may seem to be rather poisonous than wholesome. As nearly five hundred religious houses made their appearance in England under these early Norman kings, we must suppose the action of strong religious feeling somewhere. Most of those foundations were rural establishments. To find them, you have to follow the course of rivers and streams, and to penetrate into the winding and often obscure valleys of the country. Their inmates, it must be remembered, consisted mainly of pious women, who had not found happiness in the relations in which women ordinarily find it; or of men from the ranks of the laity, to whom the experiences of this life, or the hope of a better, have been such as to dispose them to covet the seclusion and constraint of such a home. Every such establishment was a hospitable resting-place to the traveller; a school for those who would be skilled in agriculture; one of the few places where books might be found, and education obtained; a pattern of what might be done by association and order; and a local power and authority, which, without statute or canon to plead in support of its usage, arbitrated differences, and promoted harmony among the surrounding population.*

* In many cases, authority in civil matters was given to the abbey or monastery by royal charter, as to the towns of those times. Thus the *Chronicle of Battle Abbey* records: 'The men of the town, on account of the very great dignity of the place, are called BURGESSES. If these in any way deviate from customary right, and be sued for penalties, the cause shall be tried before the abbot or monks, or their deputies, and upon conviction they shall pay a fine of 50 shillings, according to the royal custom, and give a bond at the discretion of the president. When a new abbot comes to office, the burgesses shall pay him 100 shillings for their liberties.' (20, 21.) The same record describes certain services—as work in the meadow and the mill, and making malt, which the townsmen and others were to render to the abbey on certain equitable conditions. Many persons, it is said, were brought out of the neighbouring counties, and some from beyond seas, to hold the abbey lands, and 'to prepare themselves habitations, according to the distribution of the abbots and monks.' —Ibid. 32.

Concerning the good general influence of monasteries in the space of English history now under review, there is no room to doubt: but concerning the religion to be found in them we cannot speak with the same confidence. We have evidence that the religious feeling in such communities did not necessarily include anything distinctively Christian — anything beyond a pagan sort of reverence for some patron saint.* But though we see that the communistic interests of such a brotherhood might be rigorously sustained, with scarcely anything really Christian to sustain it, we have proof that the piety existing in such connexions was often deeply sincere, and much more scriptural than might have been expected.† We have said that books were to be found in the English monasteries, and, we may add, that commonly they were books there to be read, and that among them, in most instances, was a Bible, or at least portions of the Scriptures. In those days, no one attempted to set up the authority of the sacred writings against the authority of the church, and any one, accordingly, having access to the Vulgate, and capable of reading it, was at liberty to read it, either in whole or in part.‡

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* *Chronica Jocelini de Brakelonda.* Camden Society. 1840. Nothing could well be more heathenish than the picture of convent life furnished by this long narrative, the narrative in which our contemporary Mr. Carlyle has found so much to interest him.

† Maitland on the *Dark Ages*, a book which should be read, though not less one-sided than the books it censures.

‡ To the negative piety of the abbot Sampson in the *Jocelin Chronicle* we may oppose the more Christian goodness of Odo, prior of Canterbury, who became abbot of Battle in 1175. The following description relates to him from the time of his entrance on the last-named office. It is written by a contemporary and an eye-witness, and subject no doubt to the attestation of the house. 'Now he began to be more devout than ever in his prayers, more ardent in divine contemplations, more frequent in his vigils, more energetic in exhortations, and in works worthy of imitation, and more frequent in preaching; thus becoming a pattern to all of a holy life in word and deed. His hospitality knew no respect of persons. The abbey gates stood open for all comers who needed refreshment or lodging. For those persons whom the rule of the establishment forbade to sleep

BOOK III. CHAP. 5.

Progress of intelligence in towns.

With regard to towns and cities, every centre of that description became, in those early times, a large free-school, in which the artisan and the trader contributed day by day to the education of each other. It was in those places, as we find all over Europe, that men first began to question the truth of the received dogmas of religion, and the sanctity of usages connected with them. And it should be marked, as a significant fact, that this tendency towards scepticism never came alone—religious faith and religious feeling of some kind, often branded as heresy, never failed to come up beside it. The restlessness thus indicated was not so much on the side of no religion, as on the side of something better. Evidence enough on this point will present itself as we come lower down in our annals. Until the beginning of the thirteenth century the towns of England were in the hands of the secular, or parochial clergy, who were obliged to adapt themselves in a measure to the growing tendencies of feeling and thought among townsmen.

Thirty men and women die as condemned heretics.

It was during the reign of Henry II. that a small band of strangers made their appearance in England whose religious singularities soon attracted the attention of the clergy. They consisted of about thirty men and women, and spoke the German language.

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within the abbey, he provided entertainment without the circuit of its walls. In all divine offices in the abbey, in reading and in meditation, he associated with the brethren in the cloisters; he took his food in the refectory; in short, he was as one of themselves. In his carriage, his actions, and his habits, there was nothing of pride, nothing that savoured of levity. As to his expositions of the Holy Scriptures, and his treatises, whatever the subject, and whether reduced to writing or preached for the edification of his hearers—sometimes in Latin, sometimes in French, and often for the benefit of the unlearned common people in the mother tongue—he was so lucid, so eloquent, and so agreeable to all, that what appeared obscure, or had been but imperfectly handled by the ancient doctors, he rendered perfectly intelligible. And the devotion of the faithful was excited so much the more, because they saw that he did not preach one thing and practise another; for what he uttered with his lips he carried into effect in his conduct.'—*Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, translated by Mark Antony Lower, M.A., 178, 179.

One of their number, named Gerard, was recognised by them as their pastor. Gerard was a man of learning, and answered for the rest. But as we know nothing of these people except as they are described by their enemies and persecutors, it is not easy to speak with certainty concerning their religious opinions. It is clear, however, that they professed themselves believers in the doctrine of the apostles; that they did not believe in the invocation of saints, in the existence of purgatory, or in the efficacy of prayers for the dead; that on these grounds they were condemned as heretics in a council at Oxford; that they were publicly whipped through the streets of that city; and, stripped of nearly the whole of their clothing, in the depth of winter, were turned into the open country, under an interdict which forbade all persons, on pain of excommunication, to render them the slightest assistance. They all died a lingering death from cold and want! So began the punishment of death on account of religious opinions in our history. This was in 1159.*

* Guil. Newbrig. lib. ii. c. 13. Brompton Col. 1050.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONQUEST IN ITS RELATION TO SOCIAL LIFE.

Injurious effect of the Conquest on industry.

THE immediate effect of the Conquest must have been greatly injurious to industry. For a while, the reign of the Norman was a reign of terror. Property was retained on sufferance. It is not usual for one man to sow with diligence when another may reap. Nor do we expect the traffic of towns to prosper while the spoliator is at hand, and in a mood to appropriate the gains of an industry not his own. Much of the land of England passed into the hands of middle-men, who farmed it from the great landholders, and whose exactions were merciless. Whole counties in consequence ran almost to waste, and many of the best towns in England were more than half destroyed.

Gradual return of order.

But it became the conquerors, for their own sake, to put some limit to these devastations, and to do something towards giving the security of law to person and property. By degrees the lands of England are again brought under cultivation, and the country which, as found by the Conqueror, was described by his followers as 'a storehouse of Ceres,'* is found again producing so much corn as to dispose its owners to pay a tax to the king for permission to export it.† But the tax received for the export of corn was small compared with that levied on the exports of tin and lead. The lead with which all large buildings in the neighbouring continent were covered was obtained

* Guil. Pictav. 110.

† Madox, *Hist. Ex.* c. xiii. 323, xviii. 530.

chiefly from England. The mines of Devon and Cornwall soon came to be an important source of revenue.* Slaves and horses were alike articles of merchandize in England at this time. The slaves, or serfs attached to the soil, might be sold as chattels in the market-place at the pleasure of their owner; and parents unable or unwilling to support their children, might dispose of them in the same manner. Strange enough, it was to the Irish chiefly that the English slave-dealer of the twelfth century sold his human commodities. In 1102, a law was passed which prohibited 'this wicked trade of selling men in markets 'like brute beasts.' But the traffic, if somewhat checked, was still carried on.† Much more legitimate was the trade of our good ancestors in wool, woollen yarn, and leather. Considerable sums were paid annually to the crown for licence to export these articles. The troubled state of England during the thirteenth century was unfavourable to this department of production. Much of the wool of England was sent in those days into Flanders, to be there woven into cloth.‡

Imports.

The imports to be placed over against these exports, were French wines,§ spices and drugs from the East, linen, silks, tapestries, and furs; besides metals—gold, silver, iron, and steel. Corn also was largely imported in times of scarcity, and lodged in warehouses on the Thames.‖ The wine merchants sold

* Madox. *Hist. Excheq.* xviii. 530, 531. Rymer, *Fœdera*, i. 243.

† Eadmer. iii. 68. Girald. Cambrens *Hibernia Expugnat.* i. c. 18. Rymer, i. 90. *Liber Niger Scaccarii*, art. Danegeldo. When Henry II. invaded Ireland all the English slaves were manumitted, the clergy having declared that the calamities which had come upon them were the punishment of the sin of having purchased them.—Wilkins, *Concil.* i. 470.

‡ Anderson's *History of Commerce*, A.D. 1172. There is evidence that broadcloths were made in England in the time of Richard I.—Ibid. A.D. 1197. Madox, *Hist. Excheq.* c. xviii.

§ England produced its own wines from the grape at this time.—Madox, c. x. Anderson, A.D. 1140, 1154.

‖ Madox, c. xviii. Considerable effort was made in the reign of Richard I. to establish a strict uniformity of weights and measures

their merchandize in their ships, or in cellars near the river;* and Hoveden, a contemporary, assures us that, by the licence given to this article of importation, 'the land was filled with drink and drunkards.'† The rich silks worn by ladies of rank, and the tapestries and other ornaments with which the apartments of the wealthy were decorated, were mostly of foreign manufacture.‡

The marts—the Cinque Ports.

The great marts of the twelfth century were of course in the great towns and cities. The *Cinque Ports*—Hastings, Dover, Hythe, Romney, and Sandwich—were vested with special privileges, on condition of their supplying the king, when required, with a stipulated force in shipping and seamen. Several other seaports were admitted to the same privileges on the same conditions. But the 'five ports' continued to be recognised as the 'five ports,' the other places being reckoned as auxiliaries to them. The great ports of this period, however, were London and Bristol. But Rochester, Warwick, Yarmouth, Lynn, Lincoln, Grimsby, Waynfleet, Boston, and Stamford were all places of much commercial importance. The same may be said of York, until the massacre of the Jews there in the time of Richard I., an event which brought a desolation upon that city from which it never more than partially recovered.§

The Jews.

The Conquest filled the land with foreign soldiers, and was an inlet to foreigners of all descriptions,

throughout the kingdom. The penalty for offence in this matter was that the offender should be imprisoned, 'his chattels seised to the king's use,' and that he should not be set at liberty 'except by our lord the king, or his chief justice.' One other provision in this statute, shows further, the doubtful morality sometimes to be found among the buyers and sellers of this period. 'It is furthermore forbidden to any trader throughout the whole kingdom, to hang up before his shop red or black cloths, or penthouses, or anything else, by means of which the sight of the purchaser is often deceived in choosing a good cloth.' — Hoveden, A.D. 1197.

* Fitz-Stephen, 5, 6. † *Annals*, 453.

‡ Anderson's *Hist. Com.* A.D. 1130, 1170.

§ Camden, *Brit.* i. 254.

especially to the foreign merchant. The Jews were among the first to seize on the new opening for traffic. They were soon to be found in all places of trade.* In the Jew, the intelligence which has distinguished the Caucasian race was shut up to one thing—to trade, and, especially to money-lending, and no marvel if their skill in such matters was such as to distance all competition. Such was the fact. They were spread like a network over Europe, in constant communication with each other, and always in command of capital. No men knew so well how to buy in the cheapest market, and how to sell in the dearest. But their gains were not without drawbacks. On commercial grounds, as well as on religious grounds, they were most unpopular. In the charters of some towns—as in Newcastle-on-Tyne and Derby—it was stipulated that no Jews should be allowed to settle or trade in them. Hated by the people, they were wholly at the mercy of the crown. The law which extended protection to other foreigners, did not extend it to them. The king could exact from them at pleasure, could seize their persons as well as their property, and deal with them as with slaves. Often were they compelled by torture to reveal and surrender their treasures. Even despotism, however, has its limits. It is checked by sheer selfishness in its tendency to cut down the tree that it may get at the fruit.† But the Jews of England, like their fathers in Egypt, seemed to multiply and prosper the more they were oppressed. Privileges were frequently granted them, but large sums were paid in purchase of those privileges, and as the price from time to time of their continuance. In 1290, the Jews were banished from England, and much of their property passed to the crown. It should not be concealed that one cause of the great unpopularity of the Jews was the Shylock severity with which they treated their debtors.‡

* Anderson's *Hist. Com.* A.D. 1100. † Montesquieu.

‡ The seventh chapter in Madox, intitled 'Of the Exchequer of the Jews,' contains much curious information in relation to this people. • 'In

BOOK III. CHAP. 6.

Foreign merchants.

In London, merchants were resident, from nearly all nations, before the close of this period, among whom the Germans and Italians were conspicuous. Nearly all the products of the East which reached this distant island of the West, were imported by Italians. One company, or guild, of Italian merchants, bore the name of the Caursini. Some of these Caursini brought great odium on their guild, by acting as collectors of revenue for the court of Rome.* The Germans were great importers of steel, and had a yard or quay near the river for the deposit of their merchandize. They were known, in consequence, as the company of the Steel-yard.† Other nations had their respective quarters near the Thames, where their different commodities were lodged. The internal trade of the country was conducted mostly by natives, either Saxons or Normans. The foreign commerce was left mainly in the hands of foreigners.‡

Regulations in favour of trade.

The Anglo-Norman kings issued many laws for the protection and encouragement of trade. Ship-building and seamanship were objects of special patronage. The custom of 'wrecking' appears to have been general and inveterate. The first two Henries sent forth stringent regulations on this subject, enforced by heavy penalties. Care also was taken to revise and regulate the coinage. Privileges were granted to many guilds and companies, which, though partaking too much, according to modern ideas, of the nature of monopolies, and being too much a matter of sale by the

sum, the king seemed to be absolute lord of their estates and effects, and of the persons of them, of their wives and children.'—*Hist. Exchcq.* c. vii. p. 150. See also Anderson's *Hist. Com.* A.D. 1100, 1160, 1189, 1190, 1199, 1208. Matt. Paris, A.D. 1210, 1239, 1254, 1255.

* Anderson's *Hist. Com.* passim. Matt. Westmin. an. 1233. Matt. Paris, an. 1235, 1251.

† Anderson, A.D. 1200.

‡ The charter granted to Bristol in 1168, contains some harsh provisions against the foreign trader, and shows that the English merchants were beginning to think themselves strong enough to conduct foreign traffic for themselves.—Anderson, A.D. 1168.

crown for its own immediate advantage, were nevertheless favourable to enterprise in those times, by furnishing the necessary security to the outlay of capital.*

Such are some of the facts which lie on the surface of history touching the industrial life of the English under our early Norman kings. But we naturally wish to know something more of the past than lies upon the surface. We would fain be present in the homestead of the husbandman, in the workshop of the artisan, by the fireside of the burgess, amidst the traffic of the market-place, and, above all, where there are gatherings of the townsmen for public purposes, if there were such gatherings. Unfortunately our authorities suggest, rather than supply, pictures of this description.

One scene of this nature, revealing the passions which influenced the Norman and Saxon, or at least the ruling and the ruled populations of London, in the time of Richard I., has been transmitted to us. It is a story which has its discrepancies, but its substance can be verified, and it may assist us in judging of the manner in which the same social tendencies were developing themselves in other cities.

Fate of William Fitz-Osbert, named Longbeard.

In 1196 Richard I. was at war with the king of France. To meet the expenses of this war, an extraordinary tax was laid on the citizens of London. The authorities of the city assembled as usual to deliberate on the mode of raising the sum required. Those authorities were mostly foreigners—the richer merchants, as well as the great landholders, being nearly all Normans, or men of Anjouan descent. It was for some time a privilege of this class that they should be wholly exempt from the tallages laid on the cities or towns in which they resided. But after a while the crown ceased to recognise this distinction. The king required the town or city to raise a certain sum, leav-

* Madox, c. x. Anderson, A.D. 1180.

ing the manner of raising it to be determined by the municipal functionaries. But such was the course taken by these functionaries, that the public burdens continued to fall heavily on the poor, and only lightly on the rich.*

In London, however, there were some Englishmen who had become wealthy and influential. Several of these had their place in the corporation. One of their number named William Fitz-Osbert, had become very popular as the defender of the rights of the poor against the favouritisms of the rich. After the battle of Hastings, many of the more sturdy Saxons resolved never to shave their beard again. William was one of those who retained that badge of nationality. Hence the name, by which he is best known, is that of William the Longbeard. He availed himself of all legal means, for the protection of the weak, against the unjust impositions of the strong. He studied both Norman and English law carefully for this purpose. His money, and his eloquence—with which he is said to have been largely gifted—were freely devoted to this object.

The mayor and aldermen of London had sometimes decided that the tax to be raised should be levied on the person, and not on property, the rich and the poor paying the same sum. Longbeard had often protested against proceedings of this nature. The humbler and the middle class of citizens applauded him for so doing, as the friend of the poor, and the upholder of right. The ruling party—the 'aldermen' or 'majores,' as they were called, on the other hand, denounced him as a demagogue, as filling men's heads with mischievous notions about equality and liberty.

Longbeard's opposition to the magnates.

In 1196, the proposal in the municipal council was, as heretofore, that the sum required by the king should be raised in a manner which placed the great burden of it on the shoulders of the poor. Longbeard, though

* *Ailredus Reivallensis*, 691.

he stood nearly alone, resisted this proposal. The majority denounced him as a traitor. 'Not so,' was his reply, 'you rather are the traitors, who defraud 'the exchequer of the king of what you know you owe 'him, and I will myself see that the king shall 'not be in ignorance of your doings.'* Longbeard had served under Richard as a Crusader. He now crossed the sea, and presented himself to the king in his tent, casting himself at his feet, and imploring him to give protection to his injured subjects. The king promised that the matter should be attended to, but soon became too much occupied in other ways to remember his pledge.

In the meanwhile, the enemies of Longbeard in England were not inactive. Hubert, archbishop of Canterbury, and justiciar of the kingdom, stood amazed and indignant at the effrontery of the man who had dared to appeal to the king against men of the Norman race. In his wrath, he went so far as to forbid any commoner passing beyond the walls of the capital without permission—the offender to be accounted a traitor to the king and kingdom. Some London traders took their usual journey to Stamford fair without this permission, and were thrown into prison. Great was the ferment with which London was filled on this account. The citizens formed themselves into associations, numbering, it is said, some 50,000 persons, to uphold the policy of Longbeard. Weapons of every available kind were said to have been collected, wherewith to resist the arms, or to demolish the fortified houses, of their enemies, should they be assailed. Crowds assembled in public places, in markets, and in the open air, to set forth their grievances.

* Matt. Paris, 127. From baronial emblem, the hawk on fist, assumed by Fitz-Ailwyn, an alderman of London, there seems to be ground for the opinion that the aldermen of the metropolis once ranked with barons. —*Rolls and Records*, Introd. § xxiii. This fact helps further to account for the ill-feeling evidently subsisting between the ruling class and the citizens.

On these occasions, Longbeard was the great orator. His speeches appear to have been at times intentionally obscure, but his auditory would attach clearer and more practical ideas to his expressions than the terms used by him seem adapted to convey.

So serious was this posture of affairs, that it attracted the attention of the parliament which assembled at this juncture in London. Longbeard was summoned to appear before it, which he did, followed by thousands of people, who cheered him loudly on his way. The popular feeling manifested was deemed so formidable, that the consideration of the case was adjourned, and the justiciar and the 'majores' sought to accomplish their object by intrigue. The primate of all England, and other men of high rank, condescended to harangue the lower classes of citizens in different meetings, reminding them of their danger, and endeavouring to soften them by fair words. Deceived by the representations made to them, the citizens were induced to give hostages for the public peace. This done, the magnates became ascendant.

Fate of Longbeard.

The hostages were sent to different fortresses at some distance from the city. Measures were then taken to seize Longbeard. His steps were watched many days, that he might be apprehended if possible when alone—so probable was it that resistance would otherwise be made in his favour. Two citizens, with the requisite force at their disposal, undertook this service. At length, they found Longbeard abroad, with not more than nine of his friends near him. They accosted the party in an easy and familiar manner, when Geoffrey, one of the two, and an old enemy of Longbeard, attempted to seize him, while the other shouted to the armed men, who were within call, to advance. Longbeard drew the poniard then usually worn in the girdle, and with one blow laid Geoffrey dead. The struggle which ensued between the friends of Longbeard and their mailed assailants was unequal; but, by some means, Longbeard and his friends

gained possession of a church, and closed it against their pursuers. The citizens, taken by surprise, dismayed and trembling for the safety of their hostages, did not fly promptly to the rescue. In the meanwhile, the justiciar and his adherents assembled in great numbers. Hubert was one of those Norman prelates who were not only prepared to add the responsibilities of the highest civil authority to those of the episcopate, but to assume the sword and helmet in the open field. Longbeard and his friends, despairing of safety in the church, had taken possession of the tower, from which it was impossible to dislodge them. The archbishop, aware that time was precious, issued orders that the whole building should be set on fire. His command was obeyed, and Longbeard and his associates, in attempting to make their way from amidst the flames and smoke, were all taken.

As they passed, bound, along the street, Longbeard received a stab from the weapon of a son of that Geoffrey who had fallen a little before by his hand. In this state, the captured leader was tied to the tail of a horse, and dragged through the streets to the gate of the Tower. Sentence was there pronounced upon him, as he lay, by the archbishop, as justiciar, and the wounded man was then dragged, in the same manner, to the place of execution at Tyburn. 'So,' says Matthew Paris, 'perished William Long-'beard, for endeavouring to uphold the cause of right 'and of the poor. If it be the cause that makes the 'martyr, no man may be more justly described as a 'martyr than he.'*

Popular feeling towards him.

The people, though they had failed him in his hour of need, showed all possible signs of affection for his memory. The wood on which he suffered was borne

* Wendover, A.D. 1196. Matt. Paris, 127. Guil. Newbr. 630–633. Gervas. Cant. 1591. Hoveden, A.D. 1196. Thierry, bk. xi. 270–285. *Rolls and Records*, edited by Sir Francis Palgrave, Introduction, viii. et seq.

away at night, separated into innumerable fragments, and preserved as hardly less sacred than the wood of the true cross. Even the earth which the wood had touched was removed as having become sacred, until a hollow was formed in the place; and the crowds which assembled there to meditate or pray were such, that archbishop Hubert issued orders that they should be dispersed at the point of the sword. Only by fixing a constant guard upon the spot could the recurrence of such scenes be prevented. Even miracles were said to have been wrought on the spot which the blood of the friend of the weak and oppressed had made holy.

The wrongs of the Londoners were wrongs endured more or less elsewhere, and the feeling of the Londoners in this instance was the feeling of the bulk of the people in other towns and cities. During many coming years, no Saxon patriot made a journey to the capital without doing pilgrimage to the spot where Longbeard had died his patriot death. Names may change, but principles and passions continue the same. We find the germ of the true commonalty, and of the true liberties of England, in such instances of resistance, misguided, faulty, and ill-fated, in many respects, as they may have often been. In English history, the civic spirit was to become stronger than the feudal; but to give that turn to the balance between these two powers, has required a large expenditure of thought, and effort, and self-sacrifice, extending through seven centuries.*

* Longbeard's friends were men whose names bespoke their Saxon origin, and his history is an illustration of the antagonism existing, not so much between rich and poor, as between Saxon and Norman. Sir Francis Palgrave remarks, that amidst the dry technicalities of our court records, it is easy to discover particulars which show the condition of society. 'A female, the wife of William le Parmenter, of Westminster, is designated in the pleadings as *Sna-wit*, or *Snow-white*, and also as *Swan-hilda*. Both these names are evidently epithets derived from the beauty of her complexion, and equivalent to each other. And they also show how purely the common people were still Anglo-Saxon in language and mode of

It was thus that the industrial and city life of our ancestors proved favourable to their political power, and not less to their general intellectual culture—a phase of the revolution of this period that must not be overlooked.

Intellectual life in England during this period.

The half century which preceded the Norman Conquest was a space of comparative tranquillity in English history. It is true, the ascendency of a Danish dynasty was the ascendency of a race inferior to the Saxons themselves in cultivation. The security, however, which prevailed, was favourable to a partial restoration of educational institutions in the cathedrals and monasteries; and the first dawn of light which was to follow may, perhaps, be traced to that remote period.*

Patronage of learning by the Normans.

The Norman kings were most of them disposed to patronize learning. The Conqueror himself, when the crisis of the new settlement was over, showed some liberality in this direction. His son Henry was known, from his decided literary tastes, by the name of Beauclerc—the scholar. Henry II. was a man of scarcely less culture, and placed his sons under the best preceptors the age could furnish. These reigns embrace the whole space from 1066 to 1216, with the exception of the twenty-two years divided between Rufus and Stephen.

The Conqueror founded two famous abbeys—Battle

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thought; for the expressions thus employed have all the spirit and the form of the poetry of their remote northern ancestors. But with respect to the upper classes, and those immediately connected with them, we may equally discern the influence of the foreign tongue in other names not less significant.'—*Rolls and Records*, Introduction, xxxv.

* Just before this interval Oswald, archbishop of York, found the monasteries of his province so extremely ignorant, not only in the common elements of grammar, but even as to the rules of their orders, that he sent to France for teachers to instruct them. With this deterioration in such establishments, of course, there had come a general deterioration of mind and manners. — Warton's *Introduction of Learning into England*, cxl. But from about the close of the tenth century, not only England, but Europe, began to give signs of the approach of better days.

and Selby, and many smaller convents, which, in those days, would all be places of education. His son Henry was educated in the abbey of Abingdon, under the care of the abbot Grymbold, and of Faricius, a physician, who taught at Oxford.* The clergy introduced by the Conqueror owed everything to his favour, and were expected to be subservient to his will. But some of them were men of learning, and did much to diffuse a taste for literature in their new connexions. Herman, who became bishop of Salisbury, founded an excellent library in his cathedral. Godfrey, prior of St. Swithin's in Winchester, was an elegant Latin poet. Herbert de Losinga, a monk of Normandy, who became bishop of Thetford in Norfolk, instituted an abbey in Norwich for Benedictine monks, and largely endowed it.† A learned foreigner, named Geoffrey, who had studied in Paris, opened a school at Dunstable, which became famous. In short, the nobles and prelates so far vied with their kings in the encouragement of the religious and literary tendencies of the times, that, as before stated, between five and six hundred monasteries, all designed to be more or less places of instruction, made their appearance in England in the time between the Conquest and the reign of king John.‡

Lay schools.

Nor were all the schools of this period clerical schools. In London, St. Albans, and other places, laymen began to make their appearance as educators.§ Some of these private schools were what we should describe as grammar-schools. In others the higher departments of science were studied. Fitz-Stephen, who

* Wood's *Hist.* 46. † Warton's *Introd.* cxliii.

‡ Tanner, *Notitia Monastica*, Pref.

§ Matt. Paris, *Vit. Abbat.* 56–62. Brompton, *Chron.* 1348. Hoveden, 589. Dupin, *Eccles. Hist.* cent. xiii. Tanner, *Not. Monast.* Pref. The most eminent scholars England produced, before and even below the twelfth century, were educated in our religious houses. The encouragement given in the English monasteries to the transcribing of books was very considerable. — Warton's *Introd.* cxliv. Of this Warton has given a series of proofs.

wrote in the time of Henry II., gives us the following account of the 'holiday' doings of certain schools for youth in London in his time. 'It is usual,' he says, 'for these schools to hold public assemblies in the 'churches, in which the scholars engage in demonstra- 'tive or logical disputations, some using enthymems 'and others perfect syllogisms, some aiming at nothing 'but to gain the victory, and make an ostentatious 'display of their acuteness, while others have the in- 'vestigation of truth in view. Artful sophists on 'these occasions acquire great applause—some by a 'prodigious inundation and flow of words, others by 'their specious but fallacious arguments. After the 'disputations, other scholars deliver rhetorical declama- 'tions, in which they observe all the rules of art, and 'neglect no topic of persuasion. Some of the younger 'boys in the different schools contend against each 'other in verse, about the principles of grammar, and 'the preterites and supines of verbs.'*

The universities.

It is during this period that Oxford and Cambridge acquire an acknowledged place in history as seats of learning. In the time of Richard I. the University of Oxford is spoken of as men spoke of the University of Paris. Many English students studied in both seminaries. Among the eminent Englishmen who studied in Paris were Thomas à Becket; Robert White, a scholar whose name bespeaks his Saxon origin, and who lectured with much applause in Oxford; Nicholas Breakspear, who became pope under the title of Adrian the Fourth; Robert of Melun, so called from his teaching in that city, who became bishop of Hereford; and, above all these, the renowned John of Salisbury.†

The school in Oxford was of some celebrity before the Conquest, possibly from the time of Alfred. In

* W. Stephan. *Civit. Lond.* 4. Henry's *Hist. Eng.* vi. book iii. c. 4.

† John of Salisbury spent some nine or ten years in Paris; and, though much enamoured at first of the dialectics taught there, he lived to denounce them with much bitterness, as leading to nothing better than ingenious trifling.—See his *Metalogicus.*

1109, about forty years after the Conquest, we find in that city a street named *School*-street, and another named *Shydiard*-street*—facts which suggest that Oxford must have been conspicuous as a place of education long before. The royal residence at Woodstock was favourable to its progress in this view, especially in the time of Henry I. It was in the middle of the twelfth century that Vicarius lectured on Civil Law in Oxford. Medicine was soon afterwards added to its course of studies. The fact that three thousand students migrated from Oxford in 1209, and the fact that quite that number is known to have been resident there not many years later, will suffice to indicate the eminence to which the University had then risen. In 1229 a considerable migration took place, both of students and teachers, from the University of Paris to the University of Oxford.†

During the greater part of this period, the schools at Canterbury, St. Albans, Lincoln, Westminster, Winchester, and Peterborough were all flourishing. But Oxford surpassed them, and was especially distinguished from them, as being independent in its origin—that is, it was not a growth from the cathedral or conventual schools. In the schools last named, and from which nearly all the universities north of the Alps had their origin, the teachers were all ecclesiastics, living as such on their stipends. But the lay teachers, who began to make their appearance at this time, were dependent for support on the fees of their pupils, and being free from the control of the clergy, they extended the range of their teaching considerably beyond that of the clerical preceptors by whom they had themselves been educated.‡

* Wood, *Hist. Vicus Schediasticorum.* Huber's *History of the English Universities*, i. 47.

† Huber's *Hist.* i. 52, note 10. It is not till the year 1200 that the school in Paris becomes an incorporation and a university. Crevier, *Hist. de l'Univer. de Paris*, i. 255.

‡ Huber's *Hist.* i. Introductory chapter and notes. 'Towards the

Places of residence known by the name of Inns and Halls, existed in Oxford from the time of the Conqueror. These consisted mostly of hired buildings of a rude description. The first establishment entitled to the name of a college, as a foundation, perpetuated and privileged by law, does not date earlier than 1264. But within little more than a century from that time, the greater part of the colleges in Oxford now known to us, were founded. The inns and halls were simply voluntary schools. Colleges possessed endowments, a common residence, and a common table, at least to some extent, and the power, for the most part, of self-government.*

In Cambridge, the most ancient college was founded in 1256, or, as some say, in 1274. The following account of the early days of Cambridge is given by Peter of Blois, about a century after the times to which it relates. The mention of Averroes in this description is an error—that philosopher flourished during the latter half of the twelfth century. But the substance of the description, though somewhat suspicious in its colouring, may, we think, be accepted as trustworthy.

'Joffrid, abbot of Croyland, sent to his manor of 'Cottenham, near Cambridge, Master Gislebert, his 'fellow-monk and professor of theology, with three 'other monks, who had followed him into England; 'who being very well instructed in philosophical 'theorems and other primitive sciences, went every

close of the tenth century an event took place which gave a new and a very fortunate turn to the state of letters in France and Italy. A little before that time there were no schools in Europe but those which belonged to the monasteries or the episcopal churches. But at the commencement of the eleventh century, many persons of the laity, as well as of the clergy, undertook in the most capital cities of France and Italy this important charge.'—Warton's *Introduct.* cxli. This lay teaching came in with the Normans, but not immediately; and as the universities rose, the monasteries fell, as places of education, and deteriorated considerably in all respects.

* Huber's *Hist.* i.

'day to Cambridge, and having hired a certain public 'barn, taught the sciences openly, and in a little time 'collected a great concourse of scholars; for in the 'very second year after their arrival the number of 'their scholars from the town and country increased 'so much that there was no house, barn, nor church 'capable of containing them. For this reason they 'separated into different parts of the town, and, 'imitating the plan of the Studium of Orleans; brother 'Odo, who was eminent as a grammarian and satirical 'poet, read grammar according to the doctrine of 'Priscian and of his commentator Remigius, to the 'boys and younger students that were assigned to him, 'early in the morning. At one o'clock brother Ter- 'ricus, a most acute sophist, read the *Logic* of Aris- 'totle, according to the *Introduction* and *Commentaries* 'of Porphyry and Averroes, to those who were further 'advanced. At three, brother William read lectures 'on Tully's *Rhetoric* and Quintilian's *Institutes*. But 'Master Gislebert, being ignorant of the English, but 'very expert in the Latin and French languages, 'preached in the several churches to the people on 'Sundays and holidays.'*

With this picture of Cambridge in its early days, we may connect another relating to Oxford in the time of Richard I. Giraldus Cambrensis lived at that time; and such was his passion for study, that he is said to have refused three bishoprics, to have spent twenty years in the University of Paris, and seven years in seclusion in England, that he might give himself effectually to such pursuits. His works were many, and on many subjects. Among them was a *Topography of Ireland*. This book the author is said to have recited on three successive days at Oxford. The first day to the poor of the city; the second to the doctors and scholars of good standing; the third to the body of the students, the citizens, and the soldiers

* *Continuation of Ingulf.* Henry's *Eng.* bk. iii. c. 4.

of the garrison. It would be pleasant to call up to the imagination the scenes of those three days—to look on the zealous Giraldus, enamoured of his theme, as he endeavours to lead the professors and students, citizens, soldiers, and working men, upon a travel through the sister island. It is probable that these recitations took place at a time when Giraldus and others passed to some degree—the season, when, in Oxford, as in other universities, the visitors who flocked to the town to share in its ceremonials and sight-seeing, its hospitalities and merriment, were such as often to exceed all the ordinary means of accommodation. So did the awakening of intellectual life in those ages bring other signs of life along with it.*

Influence of Arab literature.

The East, as the passage touching the early days of Cambridge indicates, was now contributing its treasures to the West. The Moslems of Spain were in possession of all the Greek literature and science that had survived the fall of the Roman empire. The light diffused from their many noble libraries, and their many seats of learning, had placed them far in advance of the Christian states of Europe. But the time had come in which the nations of the West were to share largely in those treasures. The most valuable Greek authors were translated into Latin, and passed, with profuse Latin commentaries, over the whole of Christendom.† By Moslem and by Christian, however, it was not so much the literature, as the science of the ancient world, that was especially prized. Mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, and medicine, together with metaphysics, logic, and rhetoric — these were the favourite studies. The study of the Roman and Canon law was of course peculiar to the Christian states.

Aristotle and the schoolmen.

With these tendencies came the ascendency of Aristotle, the reign of the scholastic philosophy, and

* Wood, *Hist. Antiq. Oxon.* 25. Warton's *Introduct.* clviii.

† Warton's *Introduct.* cxli.

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of the men known in history by the name of schoolmen. Alcuin, Erigena, Lanfranc, and Anselm, were all, in fact, schoolmen, long before scholasticism became known by that name; and by their tastes, the taste of their times was materially influenced. The early fathers professed to base their theology on the Scriptures. Later writers made these fathers themselves their authority. The schoolmen endeavoured to sustain the orthodoxy of the church, and intelligence in general, by the aid of the rules and method of the Aristotelian dialectics. But Peter Lombard, the reputed founder of the scholastic philosophy, does not publish his famous *Book of Sentences* before the middle of the twelfth century; and it was left to the 'Master of the Sentences,' as he was called, to impart to the wider range of study which aimed at something much higher than the routine of the conventual schools, the system which was to characterize it for centuries to come. The logic of Aristotle was the instrument used in all investigations. Everything to be admitted as knowledge, must bear to be tested by that method of proof. Physics and metaphysics fell alike under the same scrutiny, and theology became a science.*

The time came when this philosophy proved a grand hindrance to knowledge, conclusions so established being deemed irrefragable. Such, however, they were not, for the reasoning in relation to them often rested on doubtful premises, and was in consequence itself doubtful. In its attempts to explain abstract ideas, and to give distinctness to them, this philosophy was favourable to many subtle and acute forms of thought; but it gave rise, at the same time, to much trifling, and taught men to make light of particular and available knowledge, in their eager pursuit of unwarranted generalizations and useless refinements. Of course, even such a movement was better than the preceding torpor

* So successful was this study in Oxford, that 'before the reign of Edward II. no foreign university could boast so conspicuous a catalogue of subtle and invincible doctors.'—Warton, *Introduct.* clxxv.

and stagnation. It was the sign of life, and contributed to other ends than those contemplated by the minds with which it originated. Now, accordingly, began those subtle disputations between Nominalists and Realists in England, which were to attract the attention and test the orthodoxy of kings and councils in France. Robert of Melun, bishop of Hereford, had distinguished himself as an opponent of the Nominalists in the University of Paris.

Anglo-Norman historians.

Now, also, that series of Latin historians and annalists make their appearance, the bare enumeration of whose works is enough to suggest the extent of literary activity that must have been awakened.* Of course this great increase of writers implies a proportionate increase of readers. Classical learning, indeed, was not much cultivated, and was confined generally to a partial acquaintance with Latin authors. There were scholars who knew a little of Hebrew and of Arabic, chiefly by the aid of Jewish teachers, but it is one of the extraordinary things reported of Abelard, that, to his other learning, he added some knowledge of Greek. Mathematics, too, according to John of Salisbury and Peter of Blois, were but little studied, and chiefly from their supposed relation to astrology.

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* Such as William of Poitiers, Ordericus Vitalis, William of Jumièges, Florence of Worcester, Matthew of Westminster, William of Malmesbury, Eadmer, Turgot, and Simeon of Durham, John of Hexham, Richard of Hexham, Wallingford, Ailred, Alfred of Beverly, Giraldus Cambrensis, Roger of Hoveden (Howden), William of Newburgh, Benedictus Abbas, Ralph de Diceto, Gervase of Canterbury, Vinesauf, Richard of Devizes, and Jocelin de Brakelonda. Many of these writers, as stated elsewhere, copy from their predecessors so largely as often to become not a little wearisome as we pass from one to the other. But most of them describe events of their own time, and they often follow authorities now lost. The reader who wishes further information concerning these historians and chroniclers will find it in Nicholson's *Historical Library;* Warton's *Introduction of Learning into England*, preliminary to his *History of English Poetry;* in the literary Introduction to Lappenberg's *History of England;* in Wright's *Biographia Britannica;* and in the republication of these various works which have taken place of later years, both in Latin and English.

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We are inclined to think, however, that the architects of this period must have known much more of mathematics than was suspected by these authorities.*

Study of the civil and canon law.

In 1151 Gratian, a monk of Bologna, published his *Decretum of the Canon Law*. This scientific digest superseded all other works of the kind, and became the universal text-book among teachers. At this time also, the *Pandects of Justinian* are brought from their obscurity, and become in like manner the great class-book in the study of civil law. In the first half of the twelfth century, Roger, a monk of Normandy, lectured with much applause on the canon and civil law in Oxford; and during this century Geirard, an Englishman, lectured with still greater favour on the same subjects in Paris. The pope granted Geirard a dispensation, which empowered him to hold his professorship in France, together with the see of Lichfield in England. The admirers of the common, that is, of *native* law, both in this country and on the Continent, opposed these studies with much vehemence. But their patriotism was resisted by the professional zeal of the clergy. The civil law aided the canon law, and the canon law was the basis of church discipline and church power.† From a letter of Peter of Blois, we may see the ardour with which these branches of knowledge were pursued at this time. 'In the house of my master (Theobald), the 'archbishop of Canterbury, there are several very 'learned men, famous for their knowledge of law and 'politics, who spend the time between prayers and

* The Latin style of John of Salisbury is highly praised even by modern critics. 'His *Policraticon*,' says Warton, 'is an extremely pleasant miscellany, replete with erudition, and a judgment of men and things which properly belongs to a more sensible and reflecting period. His familiar acquaintance with the classics appears, not only from the happy facility of his language, but from the many citations from the purest Roman authors.'—*Introduct.*

† See p. 352 of this volume. That two of the most distinguished professors in this country before the age of the Great Charter—Geirard and White—should have been Englishmen, shows the vigour with which the Saxon mind was then forcing its way upward.

'dinner in lecturing, disputing, and debating causes. 'To us, all the knotty questions of the kingdom are 'referred, which are produced in the common hall, 'and every one in his order, having first prepared 'himself, declares, with all the eloquence and acute-'ness of which he is capable, but without wrangling, 'what is wisest and safest to be done. If God sug-'gests the soundest opinion to the youngest among 'us, we all agree to it without envy or detraction.'*

The Latin language—multiplication of books.

These Romanized tastes contributed towards making the Latin a commonly spoken language. Among the clergy, and all who attended the different schools, whether in the universities, the cathedrals, or the monasteries, Latin was the common medium of communication. Professors lectured in it with the greatest ease and freedom, and youths in very humble life might sometimes be heard conversing in it. Books, too, were multiplied by transcription, with a facility exceeding our conception. The practice, and the necessity of the art, gave men a great mastery in it. Then, as now, though not of course to the same extent, books which were interesting were widely circulated.

Romance literature.

Among the works of interest so circulated, we do not of course reckon the huge tomes of history or chronicle to which some twenty authors of this period gave existence. Nor can we suppose that the Latin poetry, produced by an equal number of writers, was more than partially read, though often characterized by much graceful elaboration. It is the romance literature of this age, written in Latin or in Anglo-Norman, in prose and verse, that we find most frequently under the hand of the transcriber.

The Jongleur.

Certain rude minstrels called 'jongleurs,' accompanied the Normans into England. One of these, named Taillefer, a chief of his class, struck the first

* Henry, *Hist. Eng.* vi. Warton reckons the profession of the civil and canonical laws among the impediments 'to the propagation of those letters which humanize the mind, and cultivate the manners.'—*Introduct.* clxxv.

blow, in the spirit of his own war-song, at Hastings. Rahere, the founder of Bartholomew's Hospital, appears to have been a man of this order. His songs and feats made him a welcome guest in the castle and the palace, and won applause from the humblest, as well as from those of high degree.*

The Trouvère.

But with the opening of the twelfth century the 'jongleur' gives place to the 'trouvère.' The honour of the first place, in point of time, in this new class of songsters, is assigned to William, duke of Guienne, whose name belongs to the close of the eleventh century. Some fifty years, however, pass, before we meet with a second name attaining to any such distinction. But through nearly a century and a half from that time the names of such aspirants become numberless. The *trouvère*, or troubadour artist, was of a higher grade than the 'jongleur.' His name bespoke him a seeker and a knower, and his narratives were to give proof of his pretensions. In fact, the 'trouvère' was a scholarly person. For the most part these men were ordained clergymen. But they bore

* 'The following,' says Ellis, 'may perhaps be accepted as a tolerable summary of the history of the minstrels. It appears likely that they were carried by Rollo into France, where they probably introduced a certain number of their native traditions; those, for instance, relating to Orgier le Danios, and other northern heroes, who were afterwards enlisted into the tales of chivalry; but that, being deprived of the mythology of their original religion, and cramped, perhaps, as well by the sober spirit of Christianity, as by the imperfection of a language whose tameness was utterly inapplicable to the sublime obscurity of their native poetry, they were obliged to adopt various modes of amusing, and to unite the talents of the mimic and the juggler, as a compensation for the defects of the musician and poet. Their musical skill, however, if we may judge from the number of their instruments, of which very formidable catalogues are to be found in every description of a royal festival, may not have been contemptible; and their poetry, even though confined to short compositions, was not likely to be devoid of interest to their hearers, while employed on the topics of flattery or satire. Their rewards were certainly in some cases enormous, and prove the esteem in which they were held.'—*English Metrical Romances*, Introduct. § 1. The Minnesingers were the troubadours of Germany; they flourished during the same period, and were not less numerous.

the name of 'clercs lisant,' a designation which denoted, that with the status of the clerks they aspired to be the men of letters of their time. They were not bound to the routine of the convent, nor to the duties of the parish priest. They ranged freely from castle to castle, and tendered acceptable service as minstrels, as scholars, and as men to whom the training of noble youth might be entrusted. They were familiar with the treasures locked up in the Latin tongue, and could give forth the lore of other lands, and other days, to knight and lady, in the tongue spoken by them. While the chronicler in his convent is full in his account of the doings of king or noble in relation to the church, and, above all, in relation to the possessions or privileges of 'our abbey'—the *trouvère* dwells with a like interest, but with much more spirit and life, on events and scenes with which the gay and secular world are interested. The men who do battle, their costume, their weapons, their achievements, their love affairs—all are daguerréotyped. So is it with the pageant on the coronation-day, the wedding-day, or at the grand tournament. There was a large public in those times, as in our own, who wished to know all about such scenes, and the *trouvère* was in the place of many a modern contrivance for meeting this demand. Crowds who did not read novels, listened to them from his lips. He knew better than other men what had been done, or was doing, and could report it better. Eloise, in one of her extant letters, speaks of verses written in amorous measure by Abelard, which were so sweet in their language and melody, that his name, and the name of his Eloise, were in the mouths of all classes, even of the most illiterate.

Historical Romance.

Nor was it the living world only that the *trouvère* was expected to present, so that the picture should seem to live anew for those to whom it was presented. The same poetic and romantic treatment of the past was expected from him. And in the palmy days of the Anglo-Norman *trouvère*, he did not disappoint this

expectation. History and fiction were alike in his domain, and often the one was mingled strangely with the other. Sad blunders does he sometimes make in matters of geography and chronology, his ancients of a thousand years before, being often singularly like the men and women of his own time, in ideas, language, and all things. But, with all its faults, this *trouvère* literature was most refreshing and wholesome in its influence on the people for whom it was provided. Even the stories about fountains guarded by dragons, woods filled with enchantments, fair ladies subject to base durance and much wrong, and gallant knights prepared to brave all dangers for their rescue —even these come as an awakening influence on the slumbering imagination and feeling of multitudes.

The effect of the patronage of literature by Henry I. and his queens survived through the disorders of the reign of Stephen.* But it is not until the reign of Henry II. that we become sensible to the influence of the writings of the *trouvères* on the national taste.

Geoffrey of Monmouth.

In our days, we rarely hear the *British History* of Geoffrey of Monmouth adverted to, except in terms of censure and contempt. 'Lying Geoffrey' is the name sometimes bestowed upon him. And truly, as a history of Britain, his book has small value. But as a species of historical novel, such as the genius of the twelfth century could produce, and the people of the twelfth century could intensely admire, the book has

* Henry's first wife was the good queen Maude, daughter of Malcolm, king of Scotland, by his Saxon queen Margaret. It is in the following somewhat querulous terms that Malmesbury refers to Maude's patronage of the kind of literature under consideration:—'She had a singular pleasure in hearing the service of God; and on this account was thoughtlessly prodigal towards clerks of melodious voices, addressed them kindly, gave them liberally, promised them still more abundantly. Her generosity becoming universally known, *crowds of scholars*, equally famed for *verse* and for *singing*, came over; and happy did he account himself who could soothe the ears of the queen by the novelty of his song.'—Lib. x. Malmesbury attributes this disposition in the queen to a love of admiration, but is obliged to admit that Maude was a woman of fervent piety.

an interest and a worth of no ordinary kind. Within five years from its appearance, it had been so read and talked about, that the young scholar who had not become familiar with it, was in much the same condition with the youth among ourselves who should be obliged to confess that he had never read Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* or *Robinson Crusoe*. By purchase, or by loan, the book found its way almost everywhere; and those who could not read it, might be seen crowding together to listen to some one who could recite its most touching episodes from memory. The book may not be true to history, but it must have been wonderfully true to nature. For this reason did the popular mind dwell upon it, and the poets of later time have gone to it as to a storehouse of the bright and beautiful. 'Who indeed ever marshalled a goodlier company, all instinct with poetic life. Empire-founding Brutus; Sabrina, stream-engulphed; Cordelia, whose steadfast filial piety shines out amidst the tempest-stricken scenes of Lear's sad history, like the calm bright star on the vexed ocean; and Artegal and Elidurus, that tale of devoted brotherly love; Ferrex and Porrex, that tale of Cain-like hate; and king Lud, and his triumphant burial-place; and Merlin and his marvels; and king Arthur—he upon whose shrine Pulci, Boyardo, Ariosto, Chaucer, Sackville, Spenser, Drayton, have heaped laurels—Arthur, that great exemplar of chivalry, whom Milton himself once thought to make the hero of some poem which the world should not willingly let die.'*

Geoffrey is supposed to have been a Benedictine monk, belonging to a monastery of that order in Monmouth. His book appears to have been published in 1147. Five years later he became bishop of St. Asaph. He died in 1154. His great patron was Robert, earl of Gloucester, a natural son of Henry I.

* *British Quarterly Review*, vol. v. p. 167.

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He had the reputation of being well acquainted with the Breton language; and his friend Calenius, archdeacon of Oxford, is said to have brought a number of manuscripts in that language into this country, relating to ancient British history, which he requested Geoffrey to translate. From this source, together with the Welsh annals and traditions accessible to him, Geoffrey has been supposed to have drawn his materials. But it must be remembered, that we have no trace of anything like a metrical romance in the French language before the middle of the twelfth century at the earliest.* The popular ballad, and the war-song, existed, as they had existed in the north long before, but nothing more considerable. While among the Bretons, even the tradition of such a literature is not to be found. The oldest writing of any description in that language does not go farther back than the year 1450.† If the manuscripts of the archdeacon of Oxford came from Brittany, they must have travelled thither from Wales. In fact, as stated elsewhere, the substance of Geoffrey's *British History* is to be found in the *Welsh Chronicle* by Tysilio.‡ Geoffrey indeed has expanded the fictions of his author, and made considerable additions to them; but the source from which his genius derived its inspiration is sufficiently manifest. In the *British History* of Geoffrey of Monmouth, we have the fruit, not of the Breton, but of the ancient British mind, in the department of historical romance. Through many generations, Geoffrey's narrative was received in England, with slight exception, as genuine history. It was first written in Latin, but was speedily translated into Norman, English, and Welsh. Copies were multiplied in great numbers, and the work was embellished anew, in whole or in part, by many writers, in prose and in verse. It thus became the basis of a popular historical literature—in the

* Ellis's *Early Metrical Romances*, Introd.

† Hallam's *Introduction to the Literary History of Europe.*

‡ Page 114.

hands of Shakespeare, of a dramatic literature, the fame of which must live as long as the name of the great bard himself shall live.

The writer who contributed most to make the contents of the *British History* familiar to the English was Richard Wace, a native of the island of Jersey, who threw the substance of it into verse in Norman French, adding to it considerably from sources or inventions of his own. Wace presented his book, when complete, to Eleanor, queen of Henry II. Wace also wrote a chronicle of the dukes of Normandy, in Alexandrine metre, intitled *The Romance of Rollo*. Among the names most distinguished in this field of literature are those of Gaimer, Herman, David Bonoit, Luc de la Barre, Hugh of Rutland, Simon du Fresne, Luc du Gast, Walter Mapes, Robert de Borrow, Elie de Borrow, Rusteian de Pise, Gervais, and Boson. To these names some add those of archbishop Langton and Richard I. Some works of this class, which were much read and admired, were of unknown, or doubtful authorship, as the *Pilgrimage of St. Brandan*, the *Holy Graal*, sometimes called the *Roman de Perceval*, and the separate romances concerning Prince Arthur and Sir Tristem.*

Norman architecture.

But if the Normans knew nothing of a literature of this kind until long after their settlement in England, it should be acknowledged, as we have before

* It is not necessary we should attempt to settle any of the questions which have been raised concerning the men or the performances above mentioned. The reader desirous of becoming fully acquainted with this subject may consult the following works: Warton's *History of English Poetry;* De la Rue, *Essais Historiques;* Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle*, edited by Hearne; Percy's *Relics of Ancient Poetry;* The *Metrical Romances* of Ellis, Ritson, and Weber; *Havelok the Dane*, edited by Sir Francis Madden (Roxburgh Club); *History of English Rhymes*, by Edwin Guest; *Reliquiæ Antiquæ*, by Wright and Halliday; *Early Metrical Romances* (Camden Society); Layamon's *Brut*, or *Chronicle of Britain*, edited by Sir F. Madden; *Sir Tristem*, edited by Sir Walter Scott; Wright's *Biographia*. In his 'Anglo-Norman Period' Mr. Wright has given some account of above two hundred persons known more or less as authors.

said, that their skill in architecture, even before the Conquest, was considerable. Admiration of such works was a passion with them. Before the close of the tenth century they had adorned their country with many beautiful edifices in that bold, masculine Romanesque style which they had adopted. When William meditated the conquest of England, the dukes of Normandy, and the nobles who did them homage had learnt to vie with each other in their zeal to cover their respective territories with such monuments of their opulence and taste. Castles, city fortifications, churches, monasteries, everywhere bespoke the interest of the race in such works. The effect of taste in this form soon became even more conspicuous in England than it had been in Normandy. Norman architecture occupies a middle ground between the Roman and the Gothic. It embraces much of the solidity and gravity of the former style, with something of the lightness and flexibility of the latter. It retains the arch, but uses that element, and every other, with a licence of its own. Nothing can be more picturesque than some of the domestic examples in this style of building.

Retrospect.

So did the powerful and the wealthy become the patrons of literature and art in Anglo-Norman Britain. In the absence of higher motives, the desire of fame, and a passion for such splendour as was possible in those times, were sufficient to prompt many to this policy. The result we see in the great increase of learned men; in the multiplication and improvement of institutions in aid of learning; in the number of authors who distinguish themselves as chroniclers, historians, poets, and romance-writers; and in the consequent wider diffusion of a taste for literature and refinement.

The languages spoken in England at this time were the Latin, the French, and the English. All laymen were not ignorant of Latin; but even nobles continued to regard such ignorance as little if at all discreditable to them. The language spoken by the Normans was French; but towards the close of this period

the Norman-French had borrowed much from the Saxon, and the Saxon in turn had borrowed something from the Norman. It has been said that the Conqueror meditated extinguishing the language of the people he had subdued. But the statement is unwarranted. William endeavoured to learn the English language. All his charters were given in that tongue. His successors followed his example in this respect; and when the English did give place to another language, it was to the Latin, and not to the French. French, indeed, was the language of the courts of law, and this must have been a great disadvantage to the English; but the usage was a necessity—the administrators of the law could speak in no other tongue. But in the reign of king John, the English was gaining fast everywhere upon the French, and the silent action of time was about to show, in this manner, the great preponderance, in number and influence, still possessed by the Saxon race in England.

By the Conquest, our island almost ceased to be insular. England became a consolidated power, participating in all the questions and interests affecting the nations of Europe. In the great controversy, for example, between the ecclesiastical and the civil power, England has its full share. All the subtle pleas on which such controversies were founded became familiar to men's thoughts in this country. Ecclesiastical disputes, military affairs in Normandy, the commencement of the Crusades, the fame of our Richard I. in those enterprises, the new laws, and the new features in the administration of law—all may be said to have been both the effects and the causes of a new wakefulness, disposing men to observe, to reflect, and judge in regard to what was passing about them. The five hundred monasteries had their schools, but the five hundred towns and cities were all schools; and in these last, the lessons taught, though little marked or perceived, were ceaseless, manifold, and potent. By degrees, Norman and Saxon became more equal. Marriages between the two races became every-day events. In the face of

BOOK III. CHAP. 6.

the law and of the magistrate, the two races may be said by this time to be two races no longer. If the Saxon burgess, and the Norman alderman, still looked at times with jealousy upon each other, the fight between them became comparatively fair and harmless, as it became less a battle of the strong against the weak. When the corpse of king John was laid in Worcester Cathedral, the dark day in the history of the English had passed. In future, the Norman, whether prince or baron, must demean himself honourably towards the Englishman, or cease to be powerful. The revolution of this period to the Saxon, had consisted in his being defeated, despoiled, downtrodden—and in his recovering himself from that position, by his own patient energy, so as to regain from the new race of kings all the liberty he had lost, and guarantees for that liberty which were full of the seeds of a greater liberty to come. With this revolution to the Saxon, there came revolution to the Norman. The Norman is no longer a man of military science, and nothing more—no longer a mere patron of letters, with scarcely a tincture of them himself. His intelligence is enlarged. His tastes are expanded and refined. The country of his adoption is becoming more an object of affection to him than the country from which he has derived his name. In short, the Norman is about to disappear in the Englishman. The Englishman is not about to disappear in the Norman. After all, the oldest dwellers upon the soil have proved to be the strongest.*

* The following passage indicates the admixture of races that had taken place in about a century and a half from the Conquest:—

'D. Nunquid pro murdro debet imputari clandestina mors Anglici sicut Normanni.

'M. A prima institutione non debet, sicut audisti: sed jam cohabitantibus Anglicis et Normannis, et alterutrum uxores ducentibus, vel nubentibus, sic permixtæ sunt nationes, ut vix discerni possit hodie, de liberis loquor, quis Anglicus quis Normannus sit genere; exceptis duntaxat ascriptitiis qui Villani dicuntur, quibus non est liberum obstantibus dominis suis a sui status conditione discedere. Ea propter pene quicunque sic hodie occisus reperitur, ut murdrum punitur exceptis his quibus certa sunt ut diximus servilis conditionis indicia.'—*Dialogus de Scaccario*, lib. i. Madox, *Hist. Excheq.* 26.

BOOK IV.

ENGLISH AND NORMANS.

CHAPTER I.

INFLUENCE OF THE WARS OF ENGLAND ON THE ENGLISH NATIONALITY.

THE reign of John closed in 1216. His son and successor, Henry III., was then only ten years of age. The ascendency of the barons at the time of signing the Great Charter, had so far declined subsequently, that they had invited prince Louis of France, with a French army, to their assistance. This army was in England when John died. But the earl of Pembroke, who became protector to the young king, succeeded in reconciling many of the discontented chiefs, and in compelling the prince and his followers to withdraw from the kingdom. Unhappily, the wise administration of Pembroke was of short duration. He died in 1219.

Accession of Henry III.

Henry made several attempts to recover the possessions of the English crown in France. The first was in 1224, and was partially successful.* The second, in 1229, was more considerable, and was conducted by the king in person, but ended in failure and disgrace.† Not less signal was the disgrace which attended an expedition into that country in 1242, in which Henry was weak enough to attempt to sustain the earl of

Henry's wars.

* Rymer, i. 277–295. Matt. Paris, 223.
† *Annal. Waverl.* 192. Matt. Paris, 243–252.

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Marche, who had married the queen mother, Isabella, in refusing homage to the king of France for lands held from him in Poictou.* An expedition into Gascony in 1254 had a somewhat better termination. It sufficed to put an end to the attempts of the king of Castile to assume the sovereignty over that province.† But the hold of the English crown on those territories was slight, and the Normans in England at this time had ceased to feel any deep interest in the connexion which the court strove to perpetuate between the two countries.

Character of his reign.

Nothing is more observable during this reign than the complaints made against favouritism, and against favouritism as bestowed upon foreigners. This weakness in the king, together with his habitual insincerity and his want of courage, economy, and self-government, exposed him to much humiliation and suffering. His reign extended to more than half a century, and it is filled with civil war, or with the intrigues of faction. It was natural that the royal authority should decline during this period. The doctrine of resistance became familiar to the minds of all men. It is in these circumstances that our first House of Commons makes its appearance. The vices of our kings have often proved favourable to the liberties of the people.

Accession of Edward I.

Edward, who succeeded his father, had given proofs of capacity and courage during the troubles which marked the close of the last reign. It was soon felt that the sceptre had passed from the hand of the weak to the hand of the strong. During the first twenty years of his sway, England and France were at peace. In 1286 Edward did homage in Paris to Philip the Fair for certain lands held by him under the crown of France. But in 1293 the peace between the two countries was disturbed.

Naval victory of the English.

Some English and French sailors came to words

* M. West. 306. M. Paris, 392, et seq. *Chron. Dunst.* 153.
† Rymer, i. 505. M. West. 256. M. Paris, 531.

and blows about access to a spring of fresh water near Bayonne, and one of the Frenchmen was killed. The matter was soon noised abroad. The national feeling, so easily excited between French and English in later times, began to manifest itself bitterly on both sides. The narrow seas were suddenly covered with petty instances of maritime hostility. Very soon the Normans sent out a fleet of two hundred armed vessels to chastise the islanders. This armament sailed southward, seizing all English vessels that came in its way; and not content with appropriating ships and cargo, they hung the crews. The inhabitants of the Cinque Ports were soon apprised of these proceedings, and fifty strong-built vessels were immediately manned, and sent to intercept the enemy on his return. The two fleets met; the Normans, after an obstinate resistance, were completely defeated; and as no quarter was given, the destruction was enormous. Fifteen thousand Normans are said to have perished.* The Normans of Normandy and the Normans of England were not likely to be brought nearer together by the fortunes of that day. Nor were the sons of the old Saxon and Danish sea-kings likely to feel abashed in the presence of their Norman neighbours when they had a few such days to look back upon. It seems probable that this mixed race of islanders will soon become one, like the sea which encircles them, and which promises to be a grand element in their destiny.

Edward was fully occupied at this time with his war in Scotland, and not in a condition to meet the haughty remonstrance of the king of France as his temper might have prompted. Philip summoned him to appear before him in Paris, to answer, as duke of Guienne, for the wrong said to have been perpetrated by his subjects on the subjects of his superior. At the same time, the French king entered into a treaty with the king of Scotland, that so Edward, if not submissive to the call

* Heming. i. 39 et seq. Walsingham, 58 et seq.

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made upon him, might have a war upon his hands in both countries.*

Perfidy of Philip the Fair.

Edward despatched his brother Edmund, earl of Lancaster, to treat of this matter in Paris. But Philip was inexorable. Nothing short of the presence of the duke in person would satisfy him. When the earl was about to leave the court, the queen-dowager and the reigning queen urged, that in the absence of the duke of Guienne, the point of honour should be covered by a temporary surrender of the province itself into the hands of the king of France. Of course the promise was made, that if the territory was so surrendered, it should be voluntarily restored. Philip gave this pledge in the presence of several witnesses. The surrender was accordingly made. But this done, the earl of Lancaster found, to his amazement, that it was in vain to remind the king of his promise to restore what had been thus relinquished. It is easy to imagine Edward's indignation on being apprised of this perfidy.†

Edward invades France.

But the king of England felt that success against the Scots was to him a matter of greater moment than any chastisement he might inflict on the king of France. The summons from Philip came in 1294, and in the following year the French king made a descent on the coast of England, and destroyed the town of Dover. It is not, however, until the August of 1297 that Edward finds himself in a position to attempt the invasion of France. His approach to France in that year was through the Low Countries. His army is reported as numbering 50,000 men. But his allies are said to have been treacherous, the winter soon came, and after a campaign of eight months, nothing decisive had been done.

Peace restored.

The two kings at length agreed that their differences

* Trivet. *Annal.* an. 1294. Walsingham, 60. Rymer, ii. 680. Heming, i. 76, 77.

† Rymer, ii. 620. Heming. i. 41, 42. Walsing. 61.

should be decided by arbitration, and that pope Boniface should be the arbitrator. To give permanence to the settlement so realized, Boniface proposed that Edward should marry Margaret, the sister of the French king, and that his eldest son should marry Isabella, the daughter of that monarch. In the autumn of 1299 the two royal families were thus united.*

Accession of Edward II.

Guienne and Poictou were the only provinces of France now in possession of the English. The unhappy reign of Edward II. extended to twenty years. During some three-fourths of that period there were no differences between France and England. But in 1324, Edward was summoned in peremptory terms to do homage to Philip the Long for his French possessions. To evade this demand, the king first sent ambassadors, then his queen, and, lastly, he resigned the two provinces into the hands of his son. But his ease and self-indulgence were not secured by these means. His weakness, his frivolity, and, above all, his favouritisms, had filled nearly all the families of the kingdom with disaffection, his own not excepted. In the end, he became a prisoner in the hands of his subjects; and his prison, as commonly happens in the history of kings, was a near passage to the grave.

Results of the wars of Edward I.

The great war of Edward I., it must be remembered, was not his war against France, nor his war against the Welsh. It was his war with Scotland. France did not submit to the power of the king of England, but she was taught to respect it. The conquest of Wales by Edward was complete and final, the heir-apparent to the English crown being henceforth proclaimed as the prince of that country. But the war with Scotland was waged on less satisfactory ground, was more fluctuating, more protracted, more costly, and less decisive in its result. The patriotism of Scotland rose

*. Rymer, ii. 761, 795 et seq. 817, 841–847. Heming. i. 112–114, 165, 168–170. Knighton, *Col.* 2512. M. Westminster, A.D. 1298, 1299.

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to its highest in that age. What the Wallaces and Bruces of that country could do was then done. Only the genius of an Edward could have prevailed against a people so influenced. But the fact to be especially observed by the reader is, that in all these wars the English feeling grew to be more and more with the king, disposing the nation at large to take upon itself many heavy burdens, and even to bear with many a sudden and illegal exaction, rather than see the national cause dishonoured. The feeling which had so long tended to divide Norman and Saxon became less and less perceptible. Everything that could bespeak the growth of a national—we may say, a truly English—unity, became more manifest almost from day to day. Men whose fathers had faced each other at Hastings, now took their place side by side in front of a common foe. The memories of their common home and heritage made them strong in the feeling natural to such relationships. The question was no longer what might be possible to Normans, but what might be done by the stout heart and the strong hand of the English. Wars entail many evils, but in this world there is no evil without its good; and often the greatest evil is compensated in being made parent to some of the highest forms of good.

Edward III.—his quarrel with Philip of Valois.

The reign of Edward III., however, was more memorable than that of Edward I. in its tendency to merge the Norman feeling in this manner in the English. The kings of France did much to irritate both the kings and the people of England, by the ostentatious manner in which it was their pleasure to exact homage for the lands subject to the English crown in that country. It is true, the homage was not to be understood as paid by the king of England, but simply by the chief of a province, supposed to exist separately in his person. This distinction, however, was too subtle to be easily apprehended; and one king kneeling at the feet of another, seemed in that act to be taking the place of an inferior. But the very considerations

which made this ceremony so little agreeable to the kings of England, gave it importance in the eyes of the kings of France. In the second year of his reign, Edward was required by the new king, Philip of Valois, to appear in the French court, and there to perform this unwelcome service.

Edward had more than one reason for looking with distaste on this summons. His mother, Isabella, was daughter of Philip the Fair. The Salic law, which in France precluded his mother from the throne on account of her sex, did not, he maintained, preclude himself, as her male offspring. It was only by repudiating this doctrine, and extending the disability, not only to females in the direct line, but to their descendants, that Philip of Valois had become king. Edward, however, deemed it prudent for the present to comply with the demand of Philip; but first declared to his council, that what he was about to do would be done under constraint, and should not deter him from asserting his right to the crown of France on a future day, should he see occasion.*

What Edward saw of France, and of the French court, on this errand, only gave more fixedness and fascination to his idea of conquest in that country. In those days, France and Scotland were always leagued, either secretly or openly, against England. It was in their power to create diversions in favour of each other, and so to weaken the common enemy. But these double tactics only seemed to give a double intensity to the antagonism of the English. The enemies of England to whom Scotland was not a place of safety, found a ready asylum in France. In 1337, it was no secret that Philip had purposed sending considerable succours to the party of David Bruce in Scotland. It is at this juncture that Edward decides on invading France.

It would require large space to describe adequately

* Rymer, iv. 381–390.

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Effect of the wars of Edward III. on the national spirit of the English.

the fortunes of this war during the nine years which preceded the battle of Cressy, and the ten years which intervened between that victory and the victory of Poictiers; or to do justice to those naval achievements in which the king commanded in person. On land and sea, English skill and English bravery became the admiration, or the envy, of Christendom. The odds arrayed against the English at Cressy, and especially at Poictiers, might have seemed to preclude all hope of success; and nothing but the consciousness of a higher military sagacity in the commanders, and of a more thorough military discipline in the men, could have prompted either to look on that success as possible. On the eve of those battles the perils of the English army had reached the lowest point. But the courage evinced in those dread hours was not the wildness of despair—it was manifestly the discretion of the wise. The few transcended the many in moral power. By that means, and not by accident of any kind, the few became the victors. In those wars, England began with too much dependence on allies and mercenaries. The result was disappointment and disaster. But to lean on the firm hand and matchless science of her own archers, on the line of adamant presented by her own swordsmen, was not to lean in vain, whether in sustaining an onset, moving from an ambuscade, or storming a breach. At Cressy and Poictiers the hero was the heir-apparent to the English throne—that prince of the sable cuirass, in whom the highest virtues that fiction had been wont to ascribe to chivalry were present and surpassed.*

The demands made on the resources of England to carry on these wars were unprecedented; and while Edward always aimed to take his parliaments along with him, many of his expedients for raising money were such as no law could be said to have sanctioned.

* Froissart, bk. i. c. 51. 128–132, 159–164. Rymer, v. 195, 525, 869, 870. Walsing. 166–172. Knighton, 5277, 5288.

But these burdens, though extending over the space of a generation, were in the main willingly borne; and the king was allowed to compensate in other ways for the occasional arbitrariness of his proceedings. It was the English standard that floated over the plains of France, or along the skirts of the Grampians, and, cost what it might, that standard was not to be prostrated or dishonoured. In these struggles there was a largeness and depth of feeling which sufficed to put an end to the littleness of faction, to extinguish the last remains of the animosities of race, and to give a new sense of common interest to the heart of the nation.

It is true, the time comes when the king of Scotland leaves the Tower of London to appear again among his subjects; when the king of France leaves those dark walls to reascend the throne of his ancestors; and when Edward has to look on almost all the acquisitions he had made as having fallen away from him. But it was well that such should have been the issue. Had the sovereign of England become the sovereign of France, this island must have sunk into a mere appanage to that kingdom, and could hardly have become the Great Britain now known to history. But it was not given to our ancestors in those days to see this probable result of successes which they were prepared to seek at the cost of so much blood and treasure. Our national possessions were not augmented by those wars, but the gains of the nation from this source, notwithstanding its expenditure and losses, were great and permanent. Wars abroad became the spring of geniality, unity, and power at home.

We are not required to enter into the question of the justice or injustice of the wars carried on by Edward I. or Edward III. The grounds alleged in defence of those enterprises are manifestly untenable, or at the best doubtful. But the English people did not see them in that light, and the effect of those

great undertakings on the feeling of the nation is a fact wholly independent of such inquiries.

The French court was little mindful of the treaty of Bretigny, which followed the victories of the English. Efforts the most ceaseless and unscrupulous were made, not only to regain for France all she had lost, but to excite opposition to English rule even in the provinces which had been long subject to it. The advanced age of Edward III., and the declining health of the Black Prince, were circumstances favourable to such a policy. But the fact that the next English sovereign bore the name of Richard of Bordeaux, in honour of his birthplace, contributed to strengthen the English connexion in those provinces; nor could the people of those countries be insensible to the mildness of the English sway, compared with that seen to be everywhere exercised by the crown of France.

Henry IV. —his reign.

But Henry IV. dethroned Richard, and became king in his stead. France saw in this event a new occasion for attempting to spread disaffection among the subjects of the English crown in that country. French affairs thus became unsettled. Not less so those of Wales and Scotland. With hostilities from all those quarters, the new king found himself obliged to deal with disaffection and conspiracy among his own subjects, and where least expected. His troubles from these sources extend through the first seven or eight years of his reign; and when the prize which he had seized appeared at length to have become secure, there was the remembrance of the crime by which that end had been accomplished, which never ceased to people the conscience and imagination of the usurper with unwelcome images. To this reign belong the adventures of the Hotspurs, Glendowers, and others, to whose temperament and character, if not to their true history, our great bard has given such a vivid reality.

Henry IV. had wholly lost before his death, the

measure of popularity he possessed in the early portion of his reign. His jealousy and suspicion had extended even to his own son, whom he had excluded from all power, civil or military, lest an undutiful and disloyal use should be made of it. On his death-bed, the king counselled his son to keep the great barons out of mischief by employing them in war; and bequeathed to him the policy of religious persecution, as the price that must be paid if the clergy were to be used as a balance against the more powerful among the laity. The heir-apparent was fully prepared to act upon these maxims.

Henry V. —state of France.

On the accession of Henry V. the illness of the king of France had left that country to become the prey of two great factions, those of Burgundy and Orleans. The dissensions and devastations thus originated covered the land, and exposed it to assault on every side. Henry V. was no sooner on the throne than he began to meditate an invasion of that kingdom. He had succeeded to the throne of Edward III., and in so doing, according to his reasoning, had succeeded to the claims of that monarch on the French crown. France, moreover, had acted perfidiously and insolently towards England for many years past, and must be expected so to do, unless made to feel the impolicy of such a course of proceeding.

Nothing, however, could be more unfounded than the claims set forth by the king of England. But the passions of the great men, and of the people at large, were in favour of the enterprise; and the clergy, with archbishop Chichele at their head, were most vehement in its support—such an employment of knights and nobles being sure, it was thought, to call off their attention from those ecclesiastical reforms on which many of them were disposed to look with too much favour.

War with France.

Henry left Southampton with a fleet of fifteen hundred vessels, containing 6000 men-at-arms, and 24,000 archers. His first enterprise was against the town of

Harfleur. Five weeks were consumed in reducing that place. By this time September was approaching its close. The English army, too, had suffered much from sickness; and having garrisoned the town, Henry decided on returning to England for the winter. But the news of the fall of Harfleur, appears to have arrested the course of intrigue and faction amongst the French. Tidings now reached the English, that an army of more than 100,000 Frenchmen would soon be upon their path. Henry might have embarked at Harfleur, and so have evaded the enemy. But such a movement would have borne too much the appearance of flight. He resolved to march in the direction of Calais. This he did without hurry and without disorder. The army was not insensible to its danger. But the king shared in all its hardships, and by his fearless speech and genial bearing, seemed to infuse his own spirit into the humblest of his followers. Of the distinctions of rank he would know little. Every brave man was to him a man of gentle blood; and the man who should shed blood with him was of his own blood. The words of fire which our great dramatist has made him address to those men when about to ascend the walls of Harfleur, are such in substance as history reports him to have uttered. No shame of England, or of English blood, in the language of that chivalrous descendant from a line of Norman kings!*

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* Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more;
Or close the wall up with our English dead!
On, on, you noble English
Whose blood is fetched from fathers of war-proof!
Fathers who, like so many Alexanders,
Have, in these parts, from morn till even fought,
And sheathed their swords for lack of argument:
Dishonour not your mothers; now attest,
That those whom you called fathers, did beget you!
Be copy now to men of grosser blood,
And teach them how to war. And you, good yeomen,
Whose limbs were made in England, show us here
The mettle of your pasture; let us swear

The battle of Agincourt.

In the evening of the 24th of October, the English pitched their tents near the village of Agincourt. Fatigued were they, and in no holiday trim. On that memorable autumn night they had to lay their account with facing an enemy numbering ten to one in the morning. The moon shone brightly on their tents, and on the warriors' steel. The French might be heard giving themselves to revelry, in confidence of victory. The English passed those hours in rest, in thoughtfulness, or prayer. The position chosen, as at Poictiers, was one in which, from the shelter on either flank, the greater number of the enemy could not be used to its full advantage. This gave an unusual density to the French lines, on which the arrows of the English told with terrible effect. Once disconcerted, this crowding became a fatal mischief. The English, having exhausted their arrows, bore down upon the enemy with sword and battle-axe, when they became the pressure of order upon confusion. The battle lasted three hours. The loss of the English was almost incredibly small—it is said not to have exceeded a hundred men. Among the slain of the French were the Constable of France, three dukes, one archbishop, one marshal, thirteen earls, ninety-two barons, and fifteen hundred knights, besides common soldiers. The captives, too, exceeded the number of the captors.*

When tidings of this victory reached England, the joy of the nation knew no bounds. The reception given to the king was that of a people whose

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That you are worth your breeding; which I doubt not;
For there is none of you so mean and base,
That hath not noble lustre in your eyes.
I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,
Straining upon the start. The game's afoot;
Follow your spirit, and upon this charge,
Cry, 'God for Harry, England, and St. George!'

Henry V. act i. See Hall's *Chronicle.*

* Walsingham, 392. Elmham, c. 24–27. Hall, *Hen. V.* 16. Titus Livius, 12–17. Hall's *Chronicle.*

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enthusiastic admiration could find no adequate expression.

Issue of our wars in France.

But this victory, signal as it was, had not sufficed to conquer France. Seven years later the health of the king failed, and his reign closed, leaving his crown to pass to his only child, then less than a year old. The war carried on by himself or by his adherents, in France, continued to the end of his reign; and subsequently the influence of Joan of Arc imposed a powerful check on English influence in that country. Henceforth, the distractions in France, which had done so much to favour the ambitious designs of the English, were followed by distractions in England, which were not less favourable to the reactionary power of the French. The war of thirty years which followed the death of Henry V. ended in the seizure, by the crown of France, of the last remnant of territory in that country owning allegiance to England. From the year 1451 Calais alone remains in possession of the English. Costly as these wars had been, the English bitterly deplored this course of events. They did not see, that all that could be gained from such possessions had been gained long since; and that the time had come in which the true policy of England would be found in seeking the development of her own resources.*

* Monstrelet, iii. 32–40.

CHAPTER II.

INDUSTRIAL LIFE IN ENGLAND FROM THE DEATH OF KING JOHN TO THE ACCESSION OF HENRY IV.

The industrial spirit of Europe continues to gain upon the military spirit.

WE have seen that the wars of England during this period were many, and often on a large scale. The expense of such armaments must have been great; and the productive power turned aside by such means from its better uses, must also have been of large amount. But in such portions of history there is more included than lies upon the surface. It is certain that a nation capable of waging costly wars cannot be a poor nation. Where so large an expenditure in that particular direction was possible, the industry and skill in other directions must have been considerable. Kings of England who could aspire to make themselves kings of France, must have felt that they were masters of no mean resources. Prevalent as wars may have continued to be during the thirteenth and two following centuries, the power of the arts of peace gains greatly during this period upon the power of the sword. Commerce may be seen rising fast towards the place of influence which was to belong to it in the history of modern Europe.

In English history, the spirit of the Crusades may be said to have spent itself with the reign of Richard I. But the impetus given by that movement to naval and commercial enterprise remained. The cities of Italy rose to opulence, in great part, by means of those memorable migrations from west to east: and when that source of profit had ceased, the Italian republics were found capable, not only of sustaining, but of surpassing, their former splendour. The ships of Venice and Genoa continued to float on all waters,

from Egypt to Iceland. With the commercial cities of Italy we must couple the Hanse Towns of Germany, the great trading towns of the Netherlands, and the principal seaports of Portugal, Spain, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. Commerce led to relations by treaty between England and all those countries.*

Industry impeded by piracy.

Trade in those days, both foreign and domestic, was subject to many discouragements. One of the most formidable of these consisted in the prevalence of piracy. The governments of the period were all more or less irregular and insecure, especially in their influence on the more remote provinces nominally subject to their authority. But if licence seemed to increase with distance on the land, much more was it thus with distance on the open sea. Trading vessels were always armed vessels—were as far as possible vessels of war: and the strong too often seized upon the weak, even in the time of peace, appropriating the ship and the cargo, and despatching the crew. Depredations of this nature provoked reprisals, and large fleets sometimes took the quarrels thus originated into their own hands, without consulting their respective governments. Almost every state had at times its complaint to make of wrong in this shape, and often only to be reminded of similar outrages as perpetrated by its own subjects. The kings of England adopted some severe measures to repress these disorders, and not wholly without effect.

The Navy of the Middle Age.

This evil resulted in part from the fact that the governments of Europe had no ships that were properly their own. The different ports of England, especially the Cinque Ports, were bound, in return for certain privileges, to supply the king, on his summons, with a fixed number of vessels, or at least with a certain tonnage of shipping. As the arming of ships

* Rymer's *Fœdera*, ii. 953; iii. 107, 482, 565, 647, 1011, 1028; v. 569, 703, 719, 734; vii. 747. Anderson's *History of Commerce*, i. 109–301.

consisted wholly in the personal arms of the seamen, or of the military embarked in them, this kind of force proved sufficient for its purpose. Hence we read of a thousand or fifteen hundred ships in some of the armaments of England during this period.*

Naval triumphs of the English.

The disagreements of England in those days were generally with France or Spain, rarely with the more commercial states of Europe. In its hostilities with both those powers, the superior skill and daring of the English seamen were generally manifest. On the morning of the 22nd of June in 1340, Edward III., at the head of a fleet of two hundred and sixty ships, gave battle at the mouth of the Sluys to a French fleet of four hundred sail. The fight was obstinate on the side of the French, for they fought to prevent the meditated invasion of France. But the better seamanship, and the better archery, of the English prevailed, aided as those appliances were by the presence and the heroic conduct of the king. Many ships were destroyed, two hundred were captured, and 30,000 men are said to have perished by the hands of the English, or in the waves.†

Ten years later, the Spaniard began to evince that jealous and haughty bearing towards England, which was to put the firmness and courage of our ancestors to the test upon occasion for some three centuries to come. Stimulated by the French, the Spaniards, in 1350, sent out a fleet, which captured or destroyed many ships engaged in the trade between England and its possessions in France; and threatened, by royal proclamation, to put an end to the navy of England, and to ride masters of the narrow seas. Edward resolved to intercept this lordly enemy on his way from Flanders, and for this purpose put to sea with a fleet of fifty sail, taking with him his eldest

* Anderson, i. 147, 164, 177, 201, 202, 207, 210, 220, 240.

† Froissart, i. c. 51. Rymer, v. 195. Knyghton, 25, 77. Wals. 148. Avesbury, 54–59.

son, the Black Prince, and several of his nobles. The historians of the time describe the Spanish ships called 'Carricks,' as so many floating castles in comparison with the lighter craft manned by the English. But the Spanish bowmen were no match for the English archers. Twenty-six of those floating castles were taken, several were sunk, and the loss of life to the enemy was great. Spain profited by this sharp lesson. She bound herself to good behaviour for the next twenty years.*

Impediments to trade from unwise legislation.

But this prevalence of piracy, and this dependence of governments on trading vessels for their navies, were not the only hindrances to commerce during the three centuries which preceded the accession of Henry VII. Much of the legislation of those times in relation to trade was not less mischievous. Edward II. attempted to fix the price of provisions. The result was a scarcity which put an end to the interference.† Even Edward III., a much wiser king, passed a law which required that no foreign merchant should be a dealer in more than one commodity. In this case also, the intended remedy soon proved to be more grievous than the real or supposed disease.‡ It was a law also of this period, perpetuated through generations, that the chief English commodities, wool, woolfells, leather, tin, and lead, disposed of on the Continent, should be sold at one staple or mart. The place of sale changed—now at Bruges, now at Brabant, or elsewhere—but it was always one place. The export of such commodities by any British subject in violation of this law, was made felony.§ No Englishman could import wine from Gascony—the trade was restricted to the foreign merchant.‖

Prejudice against the foreign merchants.

But the English merchants looked with much jealousy on all favour shown to foreigners. Until the

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* Rymer, v. 679. Anderson's *Hist. Com.* i. 181.
† Walsing. 107. ‡ *Statutes*, 37th Ed. III.
§ Ibid. 27th Ed. III. c. 3. ‖ Ibid. 42nd Ed. III. c. 8.

middle of the fourteenth century, every company or guild of foreign merchants in England, was made responsible for the debts and crimes of its members.* In the reign of Henry IV. this spirit was carried so far, that it was enacted by parliament, that every foreign merchant should expend the money received for goods imported, in goods to be exported; that imported goods should not be exposed for sale more than three days; that such goods should not be sold by one foreign merchant to another; that every such merchant should have his host assigned to him, and should not reside elsewhere; and that the penalty of forfeiture should be incurred by any attempt to carry plate, bullion, or gold and silver coin, out of the kingdom.† In 1289 the city of London petitioned the king to banish all foreign merchants;‡ and in 1379 a Genoese who proposed, under sufficient protection, to make the spices of the East accessible to the English at a price greatly below their usual cost, was assassinated by the traders of the metropolis. So the scheme which was thought to menace their profits was frustrated.§

Italians the great carriers between the East and West.

But the merchants of Genoa, Venice, Florence, Pisa, and Lucca were the traders through whom our ancestors became possessed of the natural and artificial products of the East.‖ The Peruchi, the Seali, the Friscobaldi, the Ballardi, the Reisardi, and the Bardi are among the names of different Italian companies or houses in England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¶ And it is perhaps due to our forefathers

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* *Statutes*, 27th Ed. III. c. 17. † Ibid. 4th and 5th Hen. IV.

‡ Anderson, i. 131. The first legal encouragement given to foreign merchants (excepting those at the Steelyard), dates from the reign of Edward I. But in the thirteenth year of that monarch the Commons granted the king a fiftieth of their moveables on condition of his compelling all 'merchant strangers' to leave the kingdom.—Ibid.

§ Walsing. 227. ‖ Anderson, i. 131.

¶ Rymer's *Fœdera*, ii. 705; iv. 387. Madox, *Firma Burgi*, 96, 97, 275. Anderson, i. 141, 142.

to state, that the extortions, the usuries, and the ostentatious display of wealth which characterized these Lombards, as they were called, seemed almost to justify the feeling with which they were regarded.* The German merchants of the Steelyard were a different class of men, and the popular feeling in relation to them was different.

Introduction of weavers.

Even these, however, became in many places unpopular, in common with strangers generally, when attempts were made by Edward III. to induce German and Flemish weavers to settle in England. Some effort of this sort was made by the Conqueror; and in the *History of the Exchequer* there is the record of fines paid to William by the cloth-weavers for the conservation of their privileges.† Before the death of Henry I. this branch of manufacture had made some progress, and regulations were issued to determine the measure of cloth, and the manner in which it should be offered for sale. Similar instructions were issued under John and Henry III. But from that time to the time of Edward III. our statutes are silent on the subject. Edward issued a proclamation promising his protection to all foreign weavers and fullers who should settle in the country. The king's marriage with Philippa, daughter of the earl of Hainault, may have disposed him towards this exercise of his patronage, though the folly of sending English wool to the Continent, that it might be sent back again as cloth, was a sufficient inducement. Many Walloon families settled in England. The natives, as usual, denounced the strangers as intruders and monopolists, and sometimes rose in outrage against them. In 1337 several statutes were enacted for their further protection. The use of foreign cloth was interdicted, except to the members of the royal family. It was made felony to export wool; and so rapid was the advance of this

* Anderson, *Hist. Com.* i. 137, 167, 181, 189. M. Paris, 286.

† Madox, c. xiii. § 3.

manufacture, that before the close of this reign fulled woollen cloths were an article of English exportation.*

Merchants of the Staple.

Mention is frequently made at this time of the Merchants of the Staple. This was a chartered company, consisting at first wholly of foreigners. It pertained to them to collect all the wool, wool-fells, leather, tin, and lead designed for exportation. These commodities they were to deposit in certain towns called 'staple' towns, that they might there be subject to the king's customs; and they were then further responsible for seeing these products conveyed safely to Calais, and their value returned in goods, coin, or bullion. In 1458, the sum contributed by this company to the exchequer was 68,000*l.* in the money of that time.†

Company of St. Thomas à Becket.

The company of St. Thomas à Becket consisted of English merchants who possessed the privilege of exporting woollen cloth, and of course does not date earlier than the time when the English began to manufacture their wool for themselves. This company at length absorbed the 'Staple' company, and was itself ultimately merged in the great company of Merchant Adventurers.‡

Relation of companies and monopolies to government.

These companies were all founded, more or less, on a principle of privilege and monopoly. To expect that the political economists of those days should have seen this principle as it is now generally seen, would be to expect that our remote ancestors should have learnt lessons from their limited experience, which we have ourselves been rather slow to learn from experience of a much larger description. During the period now under review, the fiscal machinery for carrying on

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* Hoveden, ad an. 1197. Rymer's *Fœd.* iv. 496; v. 427. 1st Ed. III. c. 1, 2, 3, 5; 50th Ed. III. c. 7; Eden, c. i.

† *Statutes*, 27th Ed. III. Anderson, i. 276. *Statutes*, 18th Hen. VI. c. 25.

‡ Anderson, i. 233, 260–276.

government after our manner did not exist, and could hardly have been made to exist. Companies did, in this respect, a great part of the work of government. They superintended exports and imports, and gave reports and results. The only disputes in relation to them were, not disputes in regard to the principle of exclusion on which they were based, but such as consisted in the complaints of natives against foreigners, or of one company against another. Nor was it the import and export trade only that was subject to these restrictions; the inland trade fell in a great degree under the same kind of regulations. Our kings taxed these companies themselves, very much at their pleasure, and taxed others by their means; and it is not until the age of Elizabeth that we find the abuses connected with this usage so great as to cause complaints against 'monopolies' to become a popular cry.

The English become engaged in foreign trade.

But with all these impediments, and more, English industry became more skilful and productive, more expanded and organized, with every generation. In the fifteenth century, the English merchants began to conduct their own traffic in their own ships in the Mediterranean.* In the great fairs of the Netherlands the English were the great traders.† At home, the merchant often rose—as in the instance of a Canning in Bristol, and of many such in London—to be men of large wealth, vieing with the noble, if not with the princely. Among Canning's ships was one of nine hundred tons.‡ Sebastian Cabot, the real discoverer of America, sailed from Bristol. Besides their manufactories, their warehouses, and their guild-halls in this country, our merchants had their 'factory' companies and establishments in nearly every state of Europe, from Italy to Norway.§ It was this industry which enabled the nation to bear the cost of its many

* Anderson, i. 223, 296, 301. Rymer, xii. 261.
† Hakluyt, 197. ‡ Anderson, i. 271.
§ Rymer, viii, 360, 464, 511; x. 400.

wars, and the still greater cost of the relation in which it stood to the rapacious court of Rome. The inland roads were few—mostly for the pack-horse, rarely for wheels. Bridges were not numerous, often out of repair; and the fordable points of rivers were so frequently impassable, that villages and towns grew up in such places to accommodate detained travellers. Hence the many towns having names ending with 'ford.' The tolls on roads and bridges were, at the same time, considerable, in some districts arbitrary and oppressive, and made sources of feudal revenue. Time, however, gradually diminished these inconveniences and grievances; and that English arm, which knew so well how to spring the bow or wield the battle-axe, achieved for itself conquests over difficulties of other kinds, on a scale sufficient to make the England which owned the sway of the Tudors a far more wealthy inheritance than it had been in the hands of the earlier Plantagenets.

It was natural that this progress in industry, ingenuity, and wealth, through the towns of England, should have made them centres of a new feeling of independence. From the towns this feeling passed into the country at large.

Impediments to agriculture.

It is to be regretted that our knowledge concerning the agriculture of the Middle Age does not keep pace with our knowledge concerning other departments of its industry. Husbandry can be successful only in proportion to the skill and capital expended upon it. But rude ages do not supply skill, and the irregularities of such times are unfavourable to outlay. Long after the irruption of the northern nations the greater part of Europe remained uncultivated. The tilled and enclosed lands, in most countries, were not more than a fraction of the soil that might have been brought under such culture. To the soil which was left as common land, that must be added which was covered with forest, or allowed to become mere moor-land or morass. Wars, uncertainties of tenure, heavy manorial

exactions, and a general prejudice against the enclosure of waste lands, were all causes tending to perpetuate this indifferent state of agriculture.

We have seen that at the Conquest, agriculture in this country was accounted as in an advanced state, not only by the Normans, but by the French. In comparison with Germany, and other European states, its condition must have been still more favourable. But the face of England, even when the earlier effects of the Conquest had subsided, and when the new order of things had become comparatively settled, was little like the present. Many of the castles of those days still exist, more or less in decay. But the deep forests which they overlooked, or in which they were embosomed, are gone. The cleared ground, here and there, amidst the woodlands, has expanded into a wide and fertile husbandry. Even the bogs have become fruitful fields; and the rude cabins in which the serf or the villein housed their families, have been displaced by the cheerful village homes, which now rise up everywhere, by the side of village roads which seem to reach almost everywhere.

If we may credit *Domesday Book*, the proportion of cultivated to uncultivated ground in England towards the close of the eleventh century, was surprisingly small. But the accuracy of many entries in that record may be doubted; and the twenty years which intervened between the battle of Hastings and the taking of that survey, were years of such ruinous disorder, that agriculture must have suffered greatly. Before long, however, the Norman began to see that he must cease to be a spoliator, or cease to have a property in his land. Encouragement, accordingly, was given, after awhile, to rural industry. One of the earliest indications of progress was seen in the enclosure of marsh and waste lands. Ground was frequently parcelled out on certain conditions among the villagers, which they cultivated, and which became by degrees private property. Men of some substance

frequently purchased the right of enclosure. An act of parliament, in the reign of Henry III., empowered the lord of the manor to take this course with his waste lands, sufficient pasture being left for the common use of the freeholders. The ground brought under cultivation, in different ways, increased so steadily, that in the thirteenth and fourteenth century the enclosed land in the southern and eastern counties was nearly as extended as at present. In the west and the north, much remained to be done. Of the proportion of arable land to pasture land we know little, as in the reports concerning pasture land the distinction between the enclosed and the unenclosed was not generally observed.*

A corn-law.

In 1425 a law was passed granting a general permission to export corn, with two restrictions only—it was not to be sent to the country of an enemy in time of war; and it might be stayed, when the public good seemed to require it, by an order from the king in council. Some twenty years later, the landholders began to complain of the undue importation of corn, alleging that it had reduced the price of that commo-

* From some facts known to us, the nobles of the Middle Age would seem to have been to a large extent the cultivators of their own estates—and the landlords in general appear to have been men of large estates. 'The extensive county of Norfolk had only sixty-six proprietors. The owners of such extensive possessions resided almost entirely on their estates, and, in most instances, kept them in their own hands. The elder Spencer, in his petition to Parliament in the reign of Edward II., in which he complains of the outrages committed on his lands, reckons among his moveable property, 28,000 sheep, 1000 oxen, 1200 cows, 500 cart-horses, 2000 hogs, 600 bacons, 80 carcasses of beef, 600 sheep in the larder (the three last articles were probably salted provisions), 10 tuns of cyder, and arms for 200 men: and in the following reign, in 1367, the stock on the land of a great prelate, the bishop of Winchester, appears, by an inquisition taken at his death, to have amounted to 127 draft-horses, 1556 head of black cattle, 3876 wethers, 4777 ewes, 3451 lambs.'—Eden's *State of the Poor*, i. 54. From these facts it has been reasonably inferred that the greater part of Spencer's estate, as well as of the other nobility in those times, was farmed by the landlord himself, managed by his steward or bailiff, and cultivated by his villeins.

dity so as to have brought the farmer to the verge of ruin. The result was the enacting of a corn-law, which provided 'that when the quarter of wheat did 'not exceed the price of 6*s.* 8*d.*, rye 4*s.*, and barley 3*s.* 'no person should import any of those kinds of grain 'upon forfeiture of the same.'*

Increase of free labour.

The progress of the industrial arts, by adding so much to the population and importance of the towns, made them a refuge to multitudes who were not at ease under the harsh treatment of the baron or the manorial landlord. Even the slave, as we have seen, if he could only manage to retain his footing for a year and a day in a town became free. Additions were thus constantly made to the constantly increasing numbers in such places who would be born free. In the meanwhile, the causes which had long tended to increase the number of comparatively free labourers, and free tenants, upon the soil, had therein increased the class of persons who would be sure to direct their thoughts, more or less, towards town life, as towns became distinguished by intelligence, wealth, and comfort. Even the abbey lands, in this view, became a normal school for citizens. The wars, too, of our Norman kings, especially those of Edward I. and Edward III., carried on as they were in a foreign land, disturbed all those feudal relations which had connected the people of England so immediately with its soil, and brought about a large amount of virtual manumission. Military life and feudal serfdom, or even feudal villeinage, were little compatible. The service of the soldier, which took him from his home, and often out of the kingdom, detached him of necessity from predial servitude; and the service of the sailor was always left, for the same reason, to be that of the free-man. In the fourteenth century this constant drifting of the population from the country to

* *Statutes*, 4th Hen. VI.; 3rd Ed. IV. Sir F. Eden's *State of the Poor*, c. i.

the town, had so diminished the number of agricultural labourers, that great complaint arose on that ground; and when, in 1349 the great pestilence diminished the hands left for such labour still more, the parliament began to take the question of employer and employed under its consideration, as the great question of the time.

Parliament legislates on wages.

The course taken by the parliament was, to fix the wages for all kinds of husbandry and handicraft, and to make it penal in any man to refuse to do the work required from him on the prescribed terms. At the same time, severe regulations were adopted against all begging by able-bodied men. To work for a given wage or to starve, was the alternative which these laws were intended to place before every working man. At first, wages were thus fixed wholly irrespective of the varying price of commodities. But subsequently, either better knowledge or better feeling disposed the legislature to amend its proceedings in this particular. But to the last, our parliaments, during this period, never seemed to doubt that they were more competent to judge than the parties themselves, concerning what the relation should be between master and man.

It was found, however, to be more easy to issue regulations on this subject, than to secure obedience to them. The spirit of resistance appears to have been general and determined. Hence, in 1360, ten years later, the Statute of Labourers enjoined that no labourer should quit his abode, or absent himself from his work, on pain of imprisonment fifteen days, and of having the letter F fixed upon his forehead with a hot iron. It was further provided in this statute, that the town refusing to deliver up a runaway labourer, should forfeit ten pounds to the king, and five pounds to the employer. In 1378 the commons repeat their lamentation over the general disregard of this statute. Husbandmen, they say, continue to fly to the great towns, where they become seamen, artificers, and clerks, to the great detriment

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of agriculture. After another ten years, we find the same assembly deploring the same evil, in the same terms, and endeavouring to correct it by new penalties. So far did our parliaments carry their meddling in such things in those days, that they determined the kinds of food the labourer should eat, and the quality of the cloth that he should wear.*

These facts are all significant. They not only show us what were the notions of political economy prevalent with our legislators in those days, but, what is much more material, they show us that the great mass of working men in town and country had now come to be free men, claiming the right to take their labour to the market that should be most to their advantage. In this fact we have a great social revolution.

Our House of Commons does not appear to advantage in their manner of dealing with this question. It should have seen, that to become a party to such laws in relation to industry, was to become a mere tool in the hands of the Upper House. The rod of feudalism was visibly broken, and these commoners belonged to the class of men who had broken it. Consistency required that they should have done their best to strengthen the work of their own hands. But, in common with many timid reformers, they appear to have become alarmed at their own success. It was this middle-class caution which disposed them to take the side of the barons, when they should have taken the side of their dependents.

Value of labour in the fourteenth century.

Not that the rate of wages in those times, as compared with the price of commodities, was such as to constitute a serious ground of complaint. Indeed, it is hardly to be doubted that the working men of England in the fourteenth century, were better able to

* The *Rolls of Parliament* contain much relating to this subject. See ii. 296, 340, 450; iii. 46, 49, 158. Sir F. Eden, *On the State of the Poor in England*, c. i. It is evident that the clergy, to their honour, deemed the new laws concerning labour severe, and that the abbey lands became a refuge to many who had been much oppressed elsewhere.

sustain a family by their earnings than the same class of men among ourselves. If the most competent judges are right, in supposing the population of England in those times to have been less than three millions, we have only to remember the drain that was made on that population by almost ceaseless wars, and by occasional pestilence, to feel assured that labour must then have been a commodity of high value. This fact may suggest that the condition of the industrious classes in England under our Norman kings, could hardly have been so degraded as it is sometimes said to have been, and may suffice to explain how the people of this country came to be distinguished by that feeling of independence, and that passion for freedom, which is so variously, and so generally, attributed to them by ancient writers. In such a state of society, the servile class would be too valuable as property, not to be on the whole well treated, and every thing would naturally tend to hasten the extinction of such service. One of the most cautious of our historians, after the most careful investigation of the subject, supposes a penny in the time of Edward III. to have been equal to two shillings of our present money.* The Statute of Labourers, accordingly, which, in 1350, fixed threepence a day, without food, for a reaper in harvest time, determined that the pay for such service should be in reality equal to six shillings a day. At other times, the wages were no doubt something lower, but rarely so low as not to leave the condition of the husbandman one of comparative comfort. Hence animal food was more or less common on the tables of working men, and to this cause Sir John Fortescue attributes the strength and courage which made the English so superior to the French. In the time of Henry VI. a penny was not worth more than sixteen pence of our money; but the wages of the reaper, and of a common workman em-

* Hallam's *Middle Ages*, iii. c. ix. p. 2.

ployed in building, were in nearly the same proportion above the average in the time of Edward III. It is to be remembered, too, that in those times, neither rich nor poor were accustomed to look on many of the luxuries or comforts familiar to ourselves as at all necessary. The probability seems to be, that the artisan and labouring classes under the Plantagenets, were on the whole better fed, better clothed, and better housed than the majority of the same class in our time. There is much, in the descriptions of the common people of this country in our old historians and poets, especially in the pages of Chaucer, to sustain this view.*

Decline of feudalism.

So, by slow degrees, the children of the soil of England rose in influence, and in the consciousness of possessing it. The Saxon element again became ascendant in our history, and the feudal element declined. It was the work of a single generation to give completeness to the feudal system in this country. It was the work of many generations so far to displace it.

Industry past and present.

We have seen that the Saxon and Danish periods in English history were in many respects unfavourable to the progress of industrial art; and the same may be said of the times which followed, until something more than a century has passed. But we have now reached the point when two probabilities concerning the future of this country become perceptible. England now promises to be a great industrial power, and a power of much influence in Continental affairs. The nation has become one, is comparatively free, and the land is covered with myriads of men busy in constructing ships, in creating towns, in rearing castles

* Eden's *State of the Poor*, c. i. In the fourteenth century the work of a labourer could purchase as much wheat in six days, as would require the work of ten or twelve days from the modern labourer. The relation between the rate of wages and the price of meat was in nearly the same proportion. But this was the rate of harvest wages, and somewhat above the ordinary payment.—Hallam's *Middle Ages*, iii. 453.

and cathedrals, in adorning palaces, and bent on competing in artistic skill with the most favoured states. The ships of all countries float in the seaports of England; and the English merchant, visited by traders from all lands in his own mart, is greeted in his turn in the marts of distant nations. The influence of this industrial power on the intelligence, the liberty, and the religion of the nation remains to be considered; while, in regard to foreign politics, the relations which subsisted between our Norman kings and France, continued long enough to raise this growing unity and wealth of England into the place of a new power in the affairs of Europe.

CHAPTER III.

INTELLECTUAL LIFE IN ENGLAND FROM THE DEATH OF KING JOHN TO THE ACCESSION OF HENRY IV.

Settlement of the English language.

THE settlement of the English language in its substance as we now possess it, was the work of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The writings of Chaucer and Barbour show that over nearly the whole of the country which now bears the name of England, together with the Lowlands of Scotland, the language spoken during the latter half of the fourteenth century was in the main the same, and, in fact, the language we now speak. Cornwall had a dialect of its own; the Welshman spoke his Welsh, and the Highlandman spoke his Gaelic; but the speech of Britain everywhere else was the English tongue. The clerk might write in Latin, and sometimes converse in it; and nobles, with others who aspired to be of the upper class, might still show some fondness for the use of a deteriorated Norman-French; but with the nation, the English was felt to be the tongue of the country, and was spoken of as such. It was the language commonly heard from the lips of courtiers and peasants —baring, of course, the difference which is always observable in the utterance of the same tongue by classes so much severed from each other.*

* Chaucer describes the Prioress, in his *Canterbury Tales*, as speaking French fluently, but adds that it was French as taught in the school at 'Stratford atte Bow,' of French as spoken in Paris she had no knowledge. 'Let the clerkes,' says Chaucer, 'endyten in Latyn, for they have the propertye in science and the knowinge in that facultye, and lette Frenchmen in theyr Frenche also endyte theyr queynt termes, for it is kyndly [natural] to theyr mouthes; and let us shewe our fantasyes in such wordes

The Anglo-Saxon language, as it obtained in this country before the Conquest, began about a century later to give place to the language since known as English. For a considerable interval this change consisted much less in the adoption of anything new from the French, than in the natural simplification and development of the Saxon. Notwithstanding the disadvantages of their condition, the Saxon population grew in numbers and in intelligence. Men whose names bespoke their Saxon origin, are found among dignitaries in the church, and among professors in the universities. The English language shared in this improvement, becoming more easy in its structure, and possessing a greater fulness of expression. The fact that the French was so long spoken side by side with the Saxon, must have made the English familiar with many words and forms of speech which were of French origin. But, on the other hand, French, as the language of conquerors, possessed no attraction for the conquered. It does not appear, accordingly, that the influence of the French language upon the English was very perceptible, until the French, in its turn, began to give place to the improved native dialect. As the Norman learnt to use the speech of the Saxon, the Saxon felt less indisposed to express himself in terms borrowed from the Norman. The result of the admixture thus realized is seen in the language of Chaucer and Wycliffe—the language of the former embraces that freer use of terms from the Norman common

as we learneden of our dames [mother] tongue.' In 1385 a writer makes mention of the teaching of English as having become common in all the schools of England, to the neglect of French, and comments on the advantage and disadvantage of the change.—Trevisa's translation of *Higden*. See Tyrwhitt's *Essay on the Language of Chaucer*. The statute passed which required the pleadings in the law courts to be in English, not as hitherto, in French, dates from 1362. But the language from the throne, if not the language used in parliament, continued to be French for some time longer. This law, in fact, ordained that 'all schoolmasters should teach their scholars to construe in English, and not in French, as they had hitherto used.'—*Parl. Hist.* i. 127, 128.

with the more educated classes; that of the latter consisting of the more pure and idiomatic Saxon prevalent with the people at large. The framework of the Anglo-Saxon remains through all changes, and all adopted words are made to conform to it. The words, too, which are expressive of common objects, and common relations, are nearly all Saxon to the last. The new words retained, have to do mostly with the new objects, and forms of life, introduced by the strangers. As before stated, the wars between France and England, during the long reign of Edward III., tended strongly towards this severance between the languages of the two nations thus opposed to each other, as between much beside. During the fifteenth century, our language suffers from the pedantic use of Latin words, more than from any other cause.

Influence of French metrical romance.

But the influence of the French language in this country, was strengthened for a while by the action of the metrical and romance literature which became prevalent. For a time this literature was confined to the French language. The traces of Saxon or English verse from the Conquest to the latter half of the thirteenth century are singularly few and meagre. By the latter period, according to the best critics in such matters, some of our most popular metrical romances —such as *Sir Tristem*, *King Horn*, *King Alexander*, and *Havelok the Dane*—began to make their appearance. Marie de France, Denys Pyram, Grossetête, Wadington, Chardry, Adam de Ros, and Hélie of Winchester, are among the writers born, or resident, in England, who distinguished themselves about this time as the writers of French verse. While the French language was so generally understood, from its being to many their native tongue, these writers were all more or less read. But the time was at hand in which the spirit of these performances was to migrate from the French language into the English.

It is a common remark, that poetry, or verse, has been the earliest form of popular literature in all

Rise of metrical composition in English.

nations. It was thus assuredly in the history of English literature. The Latin poetry or prose which may be said to have preceded the English metrical romances, came from ecclesiastics, and was designed for readers of that order. The first use of the English language for the purposes of an English literature, was in the ballad, or in the tale elaborated into verse. The earliest of those tales or histories in English verse, which were to be so multiplied in this period of our history, may be dated from about the middle of the thirteenth century. During the next century and a half, there was an extraordinary supply of such works. The pieces which have survived, and which have been printed within the last hundred years, form a considerable library. They were to the readers of those times, what the *Lady of the Lake* and *Marmion* were among ourselves in the first quarter of the present century.

But the differences between the modern poetical romance and the ancient, were in many respects great. In most cases the story passed into English from the French. This was the case even with that large portion of those tales which were clearly not themselves of French origin. Italian, and still more British, traditions, were made accessible to the English bard, almost exclusively through the French. British legends had found a home in Wales, in Scotland, and in Brittany, when little or no place was left to them in England. Creations of Italian, and even of the Arab genius, would make their way more readily to the south of France, than directly to the shores of Britain. By the residence of the popes, during the greater part of a century, at Avignon, France and Italy became almost as one country. Tyrwhitt doubts if there be a single composition of this description in our language before the age of Chaucer, which is not a translation, or an imitation, of some earlier composition in French. This scale of borrowing was resorted to with the less scruple, inasmuch as writers of this class rarely attached

their names to their performances. Their works were produced, but by whom was for the most part unknown.

British traditions the basis of this literature.

But it must not be forgotten that the prose romance of Geoffrey of Monmouth is as old as the oldest metrical romance in French, and that if the English borrowed, in the manner stated, in the thirteenth century from the French, the French had been indebted for a large portion of the material of their fictions to the genius of the aborigines of this island. The most popular elements of this early Anglo-Norman literature were manifestly derived from the traditions of the Britons.*

So general was the disposition to read such writings in the fourteenth century, that the romance in English, soon superseded the romance in French, with every grade of readers. The fifteenth century—in nearly all respects an interval of retrocession—was less productive of such works. The prose romance had then made its appearance; and the earlier metrical compositions needed to be considerably modernized. With the sixteenth century came a further change in language; and, above all, the grave struggle of the Reformation, which left men as little leisure as inclination to occupy themselves with Middle-Age fictions. During more than two centuries from that time, this portion of our literature appears to have sunk into utter oblivion. Some faint memory of traditions concerning Robin Hood is nearly all that seemed to have survived.

Character of these metrical compositions.

But the reader must not turn to these ancient narratives with his modern ideas of metrical romance. *Marmion*, or the *Lady of the Lake*, in common with *Ivanhoe* or *Rob Roy*, is designed to present a true picture of the times to which the story has relation. But in the case of the ancient romance writer, to realize pictures of that description would have required, not only genius, but learning, and discrimination,

* See pp. 114, 433–437 of this volume.

much exceeding anything generally possessed in those days. Writers of this class, as before observed, often give you the manners of their own time in times long past, and of their own land in lands far distant. Grotesque are the admixtures of this kind which sometimes make their appearance. The imagination dispenses with all the limits imposed by history or geography. Scarcely less strange, in some cases, is the fantastic chivalry to which the writer would fain do homage. While, in regard to genius, a recurrence of the rhyme or metre, is often the only semblance to poetry discoverable; and where the passion or fancy rises higher, it is too frequently disfigured by conceits which you are expected to admire as great beauties, or with pedantries which you are expected to praise as the evidence of learning. But our pleasures are comparative. The tedious in these tales was often relieved by more pleasant matter. The writer not unfrequently threw a hearty force and directness into his narrative. As a whole, they were a marvellous improvement on anything of the kind that had preceded them. The rhythm gave them the charm of music, and served to aid the memory in retaining them—especially some of their more popular and pleasant passages. The stories, from their novelty and incident, were generally of themselves deeply interesting to the minds to which they were addressed, so that little needed to be supplied by the narrator to secure attention. To us, however, their value is purely historical. They reveal to us something of the culture and inner life of our ancestors. In this view their errors, rudeness, and imperfections, are hardly less instructive than their higher qualities. We judge of men by what is pleasing to them or not pleasing, and by what they do or cannot do. In this view, the rudest products of the past, furnish the materials of history for the present. They are to us that past, as living in the work of its own thought and affection.

It would not be just to say we have no poetry in

the English language before Chaucer. The rhyming *Chronicles* of Robert of Gloucester and of Robert de Brunne may not be described as poetry. But the verse of Lawrence Minot has some of the true inspiration in it.

Piers Plowman.

In the *Vision of Piers Plowman*, we find a real painting of character and manners, reminding us often of the hand of Chaucer in that field of art. The music of this *Vision* comes in part from rhyme, and in part from alliteration—from the use of words with the same sound at the close, and of others with the same letter at the beginning. The poem bears evidence of being written about the year 1360; and its author is supposed to have been a monk residing somewhere near the Malvern Hills. It consists of more than fourteen thousand verses. These verses embrace twenty sections, and each section appears to have been designed to present a distinct vision. The plan, however, is but imperfectly preserved. Its object is to describe the difficulties and perils which beset the true Christian pilgrim, who is bent on ending the crusade of this life virtuously and piously—and the subject throughout is treated allegorically. The author of *Piers Plowman*, accordingly, was the John Bunyan of the fourteenth century. But the Plowman is of a sharp, satirical temperament. Vice never crosses his path without falling under his lash, and the stroke never descends so heartily as when the delinquent is found under a religious garb. As depicting the great need of ecclesiastical reformation, the Plowman has his place by the side of Wycliffe. But, unlike Wycliffe, he is content to censure the men, he spares the system. His censures, however, are so far unsparing. This feature of the work made it highly popular when it appeared; and when printed by our English Protestants in the sixteenth century, three editions were sold in one year. Its popularity shows the spirit of the age, especially in reference to church matters. That a man of sagacity should have written such a

work, is evidence that he knew a freedom and boldness of thinking to be abroad which seemed to warrant his so doing—and the result assures us that he was not mistaken. So the *Vision* conducts us to reality. We have in it both a product and a reflexion of the times. Corruptions of all sorts were prevalent. But it is manifest that the moral feeling which could detect them as such, and the power which could lay them bare effectually, were not wanting. So much of the intellectual and the moral aspects of English life in the fourteenth century may we see in this old poem.*

Chaucer.

As a satirist of manners, and of the manners of the clergy and of the religious orders, Chaucer is not at all less outspoken than *Piers Plowman*. Such freedom was in the spirit of the age. It is in the painting of character, even to its minutest finish, that Chaucer is especially felicitous, and on such painting he has bestowed his chief labour. He is eminently the poet of men and manners. What may be learnt from his pictures touching the religious life of the age we shall mark elsewhere. But poet of manners as he is, the compass of subject included in his works is a conspicuous fact relating to them. His characters, and his descriptions of social life, include the good and bad. Milton seems to find it easy to become either angel or devil, according to the occasion; and Chaucer appears to have the power of understanding the pleasures of the most ethereal virtue, and those found in the most free and riotous indulgence of the sensuous passions. The comedy and tragedy of earth, the hell in it, and the heaven above it, were open to him. Hence, while some of his descriptions are so impure as not to admit of being read to the ear of a second person, others are so elevated as to seem to be addressed to natures in a higher condition of being than the present. In this respect, the compass of his genius

* The best edition of this work is that by Mr. Thomas Wright, published in 1842.

reminds us of Goethe. His universe embraced the real and the ideal—his poet's world, and the world in which he lived like other ordinary mortals. Some poets, indeed, have brought a richer inspiration to the lofty and unseen, but none have seized on the immediate and the actual in man or in nature with more truthfulness, freshness, or completeness. His men and women have the fidelity of a photograph, while every shade is felt as coming from the hand of a living artist; and in regard to nature, the blue sky, the floating cloud, the golden light, the shady forest, the flowery plain, and the song of birds, all have their poetry for him. So, too, had worldly pomp, when he thought of its evanescence; and loving hearts, when he thought of their tender sorrows.

The plant flourishes in the soil and the atmosphere genial to it. Culture, even the culture of genius, is to a large extent derived. It is the result of the outward acting on the inward. Men of genius are as the great mountains of a land, piled up from it, but still of it. They do not create their age, they become its highest embodiment and articulation. Their utterances are the utterances of what multitudes about them think, but what few or none about them know how to express. What they say, is what all men feel they would themselves have said. They act upon the time, but the time has first acted upon them. They return to it its own—its own with usury. Chaucer was learned in literature. But his learned material had been made accessible to him by other hands. He discourses on themes borrowed from old Greece and old Rome, and from modern Italy. Much of this ancient and modern learning had come to him through France. But in his day, whatever was French may be said to have been English. With the Norman blood came the things which Norman taste was disposed to patronize. What might otherwise have been foreign, became naturalized. Then, in regard to home subjects, with which the genius of Chaucer

is so much occupied, the material of these lay everywhere about him. His canvas is so rich, because the real life from which he copied was so opulent. The spirit of the age was a free spirit, such as had not been known since the Conquest, and the result was a development of character in individuals and classes on a scale new in our history. The charm of the poet's pictures rested on their naturalness, on its being felt that the types had their prototypes. Mine host of the Tabbard, and the motley cavalcade which he marshals, and from whom he gets utterance in such variety, with so much skill, were all such as would be felt to be true to the life of that time. Men remembered as they read that they had seen such people before, and had heard such talk before. True the selections are sagaciously made. The characters have strong individuality. But the poet knew the observation of the time to be wakeful, that it was itself disposed to make such selections, and well prepared to appreciate them when made. Chaucer, then, is to us the man of his time, and the study of his works becomes a study of his time. The virtue and the villany, the humble piety and the sleek hypocrisy, the strong sense, the sharp wit, the sly humour, the jubilant freshness, the bounding frolic, which come up before us as we read him, all were in substance before himself in the actual life of that memorable fourteenth century in English history. In his own great field of description, the Father of English poetry is still in possession of the throne. No man has surpassed him: and in the England he depicts, we see all the high qualities in action to which the England of the present owes her greatness.

Gower.

It is common to mention Gower with Chaucer, inasmuch as the two were not only contemporaries and friends, but aspired to the same honours. The 'moral Gower,' however, as he is called, is not so much a poet as a preacher, and his sermons are often not a little wearisome. Episodes—disquisitions

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rather—on such topics as theology, mythology, history, alchemy, and astronomy, are too frequent in his pages to allow of their being in any degree popular among ourselves, to say nothing of the platitudes and declamations with which his unskilled and tedious allegories are overlaid. But it is certain that these compositions were much read by the upper classes in his day, and the *Confessio Amantis*, Gower's later and most important work, was written in English. Both these facts are suggestive. The passion for reading must have been strong, which could surmount such a test of patience; and a great revolution in language and literature must have taken place, when a man writes an elaborate poem at the command of a Plantagenet king, to please a Plantagenet court, and writes it in English. Considerable effort was made to sustain the foreign tongue, as the 'birth-tongue' of the country was found to be fast gaining upon it. When the victory of Cressy was to be celebrated, strange to say, it was in the language of the vanquished, not in that of the victors. But in 1346, Edward III. censured the men who would wish 'to blot out the English tongue;' and in 1349, he appeared at a tournament with an English motto on his shield. John of Gaunt was still more conspicuous in his patronage of the native language: and the insurgents at Smithfield were charmed into submission by it, as it was addressed to them from the lips of the young king Richard.*

English prose—Maundeville.

The oldest prose writer in our language since the Conquest is Sir John Maundeville. The voyages and travels of this worthy knight are full of Middle Age legends and marvels. It is not surprising, accord-

* Mr. Coxe, of the Bodleian Library, has shown from the roll of the duke of Gloucester's effects at Pleshy in 1397, how much our nobility were disposed down to that time to bestow their patronage exclusively on French literature. In this catalogue there are more than twenty romances, all of which had long been translated into English, but the duke's copies are all in French.

ingly, that his narratives should have been from the first highly popular. Sir John brought his thirty-four years' travel to a close in 1356, and he introduces himself as follows to the readers of his book. We omit the old spelling, but retain the exact words.

'And for as much as it is long time passed that 'there was no general passage ne [nor] voyage over 'the sea, and many men desire for to hear speak of 'the Holy Land, and han [have] thereof great solace 'and comfort, I, John Maundeville, knight, all be it 'I be not worthy, that was born in England, in the 'town of St. Albans, passed the sea in the year of 'our Lord Jesus Christ, 1322, in the day of St. 'Michael; and hitherto have been long time over the 'sea, and have seen and gone through many divers 'lands, and many provinces, and kingdoms, and isles, 'and have passed through Tartary, Persia, and Armenia—the Little and the Great; through Libya, 'Chaldea, and a great part of Ethiopia; through 'Amazon, India, the Less and the More, a great part; 'where dwell many divers folks, and of divers manners 'and laws, and of divers shapes of men. Of which 'lands and isles I shall speak more plainly hereafter. 'And I shall devise you [apprise you of] some part of 'things that there be, when time shall be after it may 'best come to my mind; and especially for them that 'will [wish] and are in purpose to visit the Holy City 'of Jerusalem, and the Holy Places that are there 'about. And I shall tell the way that they should 'hold thither. For I have ofttimes passed and ridden 'the way, with good company of many lords, God be 'thanked. And ye shall understand that I have put 'this book out of Latin into French, and translated 'it again out of French into English, that every man 'of my nation may understand it.'

It will be seen that the terms and construction of this language differ but little from those now in use among us. The prose of Wycliffe is more fluent and forcible than that of his contemporary Maundeville;

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but it is not in general so precise and accurate. Sir John was the man of one book, and at his leisure, and might be expected to be painstaking. The reformer had a different and a greater work to do, and less time to bestow on the almost numberless tracts and treatises which proceeded from his pen. We should add, however, that his prose in his translation of the Scriptures was unsurpassed in his time. In Chaucer we have the real man of letters, and we expect his prose to present the language in that form in its best condition. The following is the first paragraph from his *Persones Tale*. We again omit the old spelling. 'Our sweet Lord God of Heaven, that no man will 'perish [wills no man to perish], but wills that we 'come all to the knowledge of him, and to the blissful 'life that is perdurable announestith us by the pro- 'phet Jeremiah, that saith in this wise—Stand upon 'the ways, and see and axe of old paths, that is to 'say, of old sentence, which is the good way, and ye 'shall find refreshing for your souls, &c. Many be the 'ways spiritual that lead folk to our Lord Jesus 'Christ, and to the reign of glory, of which ways 'there is a full noble way and convenable which may 'not fail to man nor to woman, that through sic path 'misgone from the right way of Jerusalem celestial; 'and this way is cleped [called] penitence. Of which 'men should gladly hearken and inquire with all here '[their] heart, to wit, what is penitence, and whence it 'is cleped penitence, and in how many manners be 'the actions or workings of penitence, and how many 'species be of penitences, and which things appertain 'and behove to penitence, and which things disturb 'penitence.' This is not an improvement upon the prose of Sir John Maundeville, scarcely upon that of Wycliffe, in the most hasty of his compositions. But we see in it the well-head of the great stream now cherished as our mother tongue.

Occleve and Lydgate.

Chaucer left the English language a powerful instrument. But it was a weapon which no poet for

more than a century after him was competent to wield. Scores of men appeared during that period who attempted verse; but of these Occleve and Lydgate are the only names that have seemed to be worth remembrance. And even these have their place in our literary histories, less from desert, than from its being deemed proper, where so many are passed by as worthless, to mention at least one or two as being a shade better than the rest.

Progress and influence of art.

In this attempt to enter into the educated thought and feeling of our ancestors in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the influence of the fine arts in those times should not be overlooked. The life of the Conqueror was consumed with care to uphold a great military power, and to secure the estates and the revenue necessary to that object. His son Rufus was still less disposed to look to art as a source of pleasure. It is with Henry I. that the new movement in this direction commences.

Norman architecture gives place to the early English.

We have seen that the Normans had shown themselves great admirers of architecture before their connexion with this country. But in this respect, as in others, the Norman intellect had realized little in Normandy compared with what it was to realize in England. Saxon architecture was a rude imitation of the Roman. The same may be said of the Norman. In little more than a century after the Conquest, the heavy Norman arches and pillars were to be displaced, in nearly all ecclesiastical edifices, by the lighter and more elegant constructions now known as the 'Early English.' The Norman style was well adapted to fortifications and castles; but when the pointed Gothic made its appearance, about the middle of the twelfth century, it became at once the favourite with all churchmen, and in those days churchmen were the great architects. Chichester, Hereford, and Durham, show what the genius was, in this respect, which the Normans brought with them into England. Salisbury, Canterbury, and York, show the more re-

fined conceptions of art which were to become familiar to them when they had themselves become more English than Norman.

With this advance of taste in the general form of such buildings, came a corresponding improvement in regard to everything contributing towards the decoration of them. Furniture, sculpture, painting, stained glass, carved wood, and monumental brasses, all make their appearance in a higher style of workmanship. It was in the cathedrals of England that the general taste developed itself which was to extend by degrees to the guild of the merchant, the castle of the baron, and the palace of the king. The struggle between the Norman and the early English styles of building is perceptible to the end of the twelfth century. But from that time the English becomes ascendant. The cathedrals completed in the time of Henry II. are those of Carlisle, Norwich, Peterborough, Rochester, Winchester, Canterbury, and York, and in all these the English taste is predominant. The fraternities of masons were of eminent service in these works, but the zealous ecclesiastic was the great patron of such undertakings, and the gifted Englishman was often an able coadjutor in such labours. It is, however, in the long reigns of Henry III. and Edward III. that the encouragement of genius in this direction is most conspicuous. Henry III. knew little of the science of government, but he was a munificent patron of art. We still possess records containing instructions given by him to a number of architects, sculptors, painters, and goldsmiths, and stating the sums paid for their services.* It seems certain, that in his time, our painters painted in oil, but it was no doubt left to Van Eyck to excel them greatly in the manner of using that substance. It is certain, also, that their paint-

* *Issues of the Exchequer*, by F. Devon, and *Rotuli Literarum Clausarum*, by T. D. Hardy. It would be easy to fill many pages with extracts from these sources relating to this topic.

ings embraced historical subjects; of which some judgment may be formed from the sculpture, and illuminated books of the time, and from such specimens of painting thus ancient as may be seen in the Chapter-house of Westminster. In several instances, the artists employed by Henry III. were Englishmen; and critics in art say that there are defects and peculiarities in the English sculpture, which often bespeak the isolation, and self-culture, of native talent. It is this native culture which effects the transition from the rude Norman slab which covered the tomb, to the full-length figure upon it, with its costume and ornaments, and pillow for the resting of the head. The tombs of kings, prelates, and Knights Templars mark the progress of such tastes. In the architectural forms and ornaments, in the decorated windows, the carved oak, the wall and panel paintings, and in the rich goldsmith-work, of those long-past days, we see the pleasant conceptions, the patient care, and the realized ideas, which then lived in the hearts of living men. The increasing wealth of the country under Edward III. tended greatly to diffuse such tastes; and tended, we should add, to not a little extravagance among the men and women of that generation in the fancy and cost bestowed by them on their tailoring and millinery. Even parliament interfered to check these follies, but with little effect.*

Comparative rudeness in the Middle Age.

It would be a great mistake, however, to suppose that the homes of the knights and barons of England were generally the seat of great refinement and splendour. 'We have reached, in this age,' says Mr. Hallam, 'so high a pitch of luxury, that we can hardly 'believe or comprehend the frugality of ancient times; 'and have in general formed mistaken notions as to

* Taylor's *Fine Arts in Great Britain*, i. c. 4, 5, 6. St. Stephen's Chapel, where until recently the House of Commons assembled, was built by Edward III., and beautiful as that edifice was both in its architecture and sculpture, the paintings with which its walls were originally covered are said to have been in a higher style of taste.—Ibid. i. 156.

'the habits of expenditure which then prevailed. 'Accustomed to judge of feudal and chivalrous ages 'by works of fiction, or by historians who embellished 'their writings with accounts of occasional festivals 'and tournaments, and sometimes inattentive enough 'to transfer the manners of the seventeenth to the 'fourteenth century, we are not at all aware of the 'usual simplicity with which the gentry lived under 'Edward I. or even Henry VI. They drank little 'wine; they had no foreign luxuries; they rarely or 'never kept male servants, except for husbandry; 'their horses, as we may guess by the price, were in- 'different; they seldom travelled beyond their county. 'And even their hospitality must have been greatly 'limited, if the value of manors were really no greater 'than we find in many surveys.'* We have no doubt, that a public dinner given by a mayor of London or of Bristol, would have shown more signs of opulence and luxury than the proudest barons of England had become familiar with in their own halls.

The universities.

The position of Oxford and Cambridge in relation to the intellectual life of this period must have been highly influential. Nearly all the foundations for the advancement of learning in those places made their appearance during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. From the almost incredible number of students which are said to have resorted to them, the educated thought of the age could not fail to be largely of their creation. But the clergy, and the religious orders, were the great teachers, and the history of those establishments, in consequence, is associated with the ecclesiastical, more than with the secular affairs of the time, and will come most naturally under consideration when we attempt to estimate the religious life of our ancestors during this, the best portion of the Middle Age. The youth of the upper class, and in a measure of the middle class, appear to have given some

* *Middle Ages*, iii. 450.

years to the university studies of those days, embracing as they did, literature, natural science, metaphysics, and, above all, theology.

City life.

Still, to judge concerning the intellectual life of England in such times, we must look beyond what is to be found in colleges, or in books. Books are great teachers, but they are not the only teachers. Books and men are ever acting on each other, and it is their combined influence that makes society what it is. London has always been a great educator—not less so than Oxford. The handicrafts, the traffic, the adventures in distant lands, with which the thoughts and passions of that great metropolis have ever been interested, have added much to the stock of social intelligence, doing largely and directly, what seats of learning can do only partially and indirectly. Ingenuity in production, skill in trade, concern with government — with government at Guildhall and government at Westminster, all have contributed to elevate the popular capacity, and to give it discipline and power. Religion, too, has had its office in this connexion, as we shall presently see. In the fourteenth century, Oxford had become a place where a bold resistance could be at times presented to the papal authority, and even to royal authority, in favour of a comparative liberty of thought; and London had become a place where a puritan jealousy of ecclesiastical power, and a puritan passion for freedom, seemed to prognosticate revolutions of such a nature as the country had not yet seen.

CHAPTER IV.

POLITICAL LIFE IN ENGLAND FROM THE DEATH OF KING JOHN TO THE ACCESSION OF HENRY IV.

On the relation between commerce and freedom.

THE relation between a prosperous commerce and political freedom is rather natural than necessary. Without a moderate share of security for person and property, productive skill will do its work but imperfectly. But even an arbitrary government may give sufficient protection to the merchant to ensure the accumulation of wealth, and with that a high degree of civilization. Such a measure of protection was conferred by Philip and Alexander; by Cæsar and Augustus; by the Medici and the Borghesi; by Richelieu, Mazarin, and Louis XIV. But the brilliancy of the times with which those names are associated had no relation to political liberty. In the sciences, in the arts, in the genius of every complexion in those ages, we see the splendour, not of the free, but of the servile. It was a gorgeous pageant furnished by the slave to his master. The language of some men is—give us a flourishing trade and you give us everything. But the case is not so. With that gain there may come the loss of everything of real value—the loss of liberty, and an exchange of the virtues becoming the free, for the vices natural to the bondsman.

The Great Council after the Conquest.

Happily, in English history, the relation between the growing industry of our people and their growing freedom, is at all times perceptible. Even our Anglo-Norman kings were not possessed of power sufficient to render it safe that they should attempt to dispense with the aid of their subjects either in making laws or in imposing taxes. If there were some exceptions to

this rule, they were always exceptions. It is true their Great Council consisted of the chief tenants of the crown only—but in them all the sub-tenants were supposed to be represented.* Every chief vassal was the natural protector of his sub-vassal. It was to the interest of the baron that the tenants dependent on him should not be reached by the authority of the crown in any way to their injury. He too often oppressed them himself; but it was another matter when a third party became the delinquent. In like manner, the king, who claimed all Englishmen as his subjects, became at times jealous of the powers assumed by the barons; and the disagreements between these rival authorities, if sometimes a double mischief to the poor commonalty, were more frequently an advantage. The jealousy of each tended to keep both more within the limits of the law, such as it was.

Early action of the representative principle.

But the representative principle, which had passed in a measure from the Witanagemote of the Saxons to the Great Council of the new race of kings, survived, as we have seen in a preceding chapter, still more perceptibly in the usages of the Hundred courts, and of the County courts, which had been perpetuated from those times. In the levying of imposts, and in the administration of justice, the hundreds and the counties were all represented by their 'good men,' chosen for that purpose. It only remained that the commoner, who was allowed to administer law in the court of the county, should be allowed to be a party to

* It is clear that their 'Great Council' bore no resemblance to the parliaments of Paris in a later age, whose province was simply to make record of the pleasure of the crown. The barons were convened, in express terms, for conference and deliberation on public affairs, and they often modified the proposals of the sovereign, when they did not supersede or resist them.—See *Edinburgh Review*, xxvi. 351 et seq. Allen's *Growth of the Prerogative*. But it must be admitted that the influence of the 'Great Council' is more conspicuous for a time in connexion with levying aids, than in regard to legislation.—*The Parliaments and Councils of England.* (Record Commission.) Introd.

the making of law in the high court of parliament; and that the man who was summoned to levy local taxes for local purposes, should be summoned to levy national taxes for national purposes, and the substance of our present constitution would be secured, even in those remote times. When this natural concession was made to the commoner, no new principle was introduced. It was simply the reasonable expansion of an old one.

Limited aim of the Great Charter.

Such a change, however, was not contemplated by the authors of the Great Charter. Their great aim was to protect the subject against the arbitrariness and the spoliations of the crown, by subjecting that power more effectually to the control of the law, through the medium of parliament. But the constitution of parliament remained substantially as before. The only representation of the commons was in the class above them—in the nobles—and men do not appear to have thought at that time of representation on any broader basis.

Gentry—not known to political life in England.

One circumstance there was which may have tended for a time to preclude any such thoughts. All the subjects of the English crown below the actual possessor of a peerage were then upon a level. The distinction between gentry and commonalty, which obtained so generally on the Continent, was unknown in this country. The less military character of the feudal system in England is supposed to have been the principal cause of this difference, for it soon became a custom of some prevalence among us to pay a fixed sum in lieu of military service. But it followed from this fact, that if the principle of representation was to be at all extended, it could not be by an easy transition to some second privileged class, for that class did not exist. The only move possible in favour of that principle, was a move in favour of all freemen, whether landholders or burgesses, rich or poor. But this great democratic element, when once taken up, so as to get a voice in our legislature, was

to contribute in an eminent degree to the preservation of the English constitution in its present form.*

Immediate effect of the Great Charter.

Just half a century intervenes between the first signing of the Great Charter, and the assembling of the first English House of Commons. Henry III., who reigned through this whole interval, was wanting in the sagacity and the energy required by his position. But even his weakness was favourable to the material prosperity of his subjects, and to a consolidation of the liberties which they had recently acquired. The Great Charter was more than once confirmed.† The practice of making money-grants in parliament dependent on a redress of grievances, was made to be familiar to the mind of the nation through that long reign. Much was still done contrary to law. But a strong curb was laid from time to time on the royal prerogative by the barons. Even the clergy became zealous to uphold the Charter, as affording them their best means of security against the rapacity of the court of Rome on the one hand, and against the unreasonable demands of their sovereign—who was generally the tool of that court—on the other. The king taxed his own demesne-lands and towns at pleasure, but he did not attempt to tax the nation, except with the consent of the men who were accounted its representatives.

In fact, from this time, a new feeling comes over the mind of the nation in regard to everything affecting its liberties. Those liberties have become greater—

* Hallam, *Middle Ages*, ii. 476. In the custom which grew up in those times of allowing lesser tenants *in capite* to attend parliament along with the greater, we may discern a tendency towards the recognition, even in that quarter, of a second class of members in the national council. There is what looks like a sign of this wholesome innovation in the 15th of John.—*Parliaments and Councils of England*, Introd. xii. Prynne's *Register*.

† 'The Charter of John was, in fact, superseded by that of the 9th of Henry III., which has ever since been recognised as the Great Charter of Liberties.'—*Parl. and Counc. of Eng.* Introd. Barrington, *Observations on the Statutes*.

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more secure. The Great Charter has become a great landmark. It has diffused new ideas—awakened a new sense of right. The sovereign power is henceforth felt to be, and is almost everywhere asserted to be, not in the person who is privileged to wear the English crown, but in the law which that person is bound to observe and to administer. 'The king,' says Bracton, the great lawyer of the time of Henry III., 'the king must not be subject to any man, but 'to God and the law; for the law makes him king. 'Let the king, therefore, give to the law what the 'law gives to him, dominion and power; for there is 'no king where will and not law bears rule.'* Even stronger passages than these occur in the pages of this eminent authority, showing clearly that no doctrine which should place the king above the law was accounted in that day as endurable. Speaking of the earls and barons as possessing at least a co-ordinate authority with the sovereign, Bracton writes, 'If the 'king were without a bridle, that is, the law, they 'ought to put a bridle upon him.'†

Consonant with these doctrines were the proceedings in parliament during this long reign. In 1237, the king stated that the expenses attendant on his marriage, and on the marriage of his sister to the emperor, had exhausted his resources. The barons answered that they had not been consulted on those matters, and on that ground they did not see why the costs should fall on them.‡ In 1241, the sum reluctantly granted, was assigned to the care of four barons,

* 'Ipse autem rex, non debet esse sub homine, sed sub Deo et sub lege, quia lex facit regem. Attribuit igitur rex legi quæ lex attribuit ei, videlicet dominationem et potestatem, non est enim rex ubi dominantur voluntas et non lex.'—Lib. i. c. 8.

† Ibid. lib. ii. c. 16.

‡ In this parliament, however, 'the earls, barons, et 'liberi homines,' granted 'pro se et suis vilanis' a thirtieth part of their moveables.'—*Parl. and Councils of England*, Henry III. The above expression indicates the gradual elevation of the class to which the term 'villein' was still applied.

that it might be expended for the benefit of the kingdom. In 1244, the barons refused to make any grant, alleging the mal-administration of former grants as the reason, and claiming to nominate the chief ministers.* In 1257, the pope had seduced the weak monarch into the project of attempting to make his second son, Edmund, king of Sicily. The embarrassments which he thus brought upon himself were overwhelming, and called forth the most angry feeling on the part of his subjects.† Hence the civil commotion which placed Simon de Montfort at the head of the malcontent barons; and the exigency which led that nobleman to assemble the first English parliament, including representatives chosen by the commons, in addition to the peers usually summoned by the crown.

The first House of Commons, 1265.

The writs issued by Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, convening this memorable parliament, required 'the sheriffs to elect and return two knights for 'each county; two citizens for each city; and two bur-'gesses for each borough in the county.' The king's 'Great Council' consisted at this time of such peers as were summoned to parliament by the king's special writ, and such of the lesser barons or tenants, holding a certain amount of land directly from the crown, as chose to be present in virtue of the royal proclamation, which had given general notice of the time and place of meeting. The knights of the shire were chosen by the class who were known as suitors in the county courts, that is, by all freeholders there present, whether holding directly from the crown, or from some inter-

* The clergy and nobles deliberated apart, but by a joint committee, presented a joint remonstrance, which was ill received, and the parliament adjourned. When reassembled, three weeks later, the king promised to observe the liberties sworn to at his coronation, and money was voted. In the following autumn the parliament refused an aid against the Welsh. In 1245 there is the same recurrence of complaints and refusal of a supply. —*Parl. Hist.*

† Ibid. i. 15–34.

mediate lord, and whether holding much land, or the smallest quantity. The statute restricting the right of voting for a representative in parliament to holders in the value of forty shillings and upwards, is not older than the reign of Henry VI. The representatives of cities were of course chosen by the citizens, and the representatives of boroughs by the burgesses. But the exact qualifications of these voters cannot now be determined.* On the Continent, the fact that the municipal institutions introduced by the Romans had survived, more or less, through all the subsequent changes, greatly influenced the relation of these bodies to the central authority of the state. But the usages of the Anglo-Saxon tything, and of the Hundred court, exhibit the forms which the principle of self-government assumed in this country, and which prepared the way for the influence of the city and the borough on the constitution.

The imposts levied on counties and on towns were generally fixed in each case as the result of conferences with smaller bodies of men acting as delegates for a

* *Edinburgh Rev.* vol. xxvi. 341 et seq. Hallam, *Middle Ages*, iii. 13–29. 'In cities and boroughs there was no systematic qualification established by law. All freeholders probably had not, under Edward I., the right of electing representatives in parliament. Some freeholders certainly had such power; and the freeholders of cities and boroughs within the several shires, if owing suit to the county courts, may have concurred in those elections. For the body of the laity in those counties in which taxes were usually imposed, some freeholders of the county elected representatives for the whole. For certain cities and boroughs, representatives were elected by certain persons, according to their various and incongruous constitutions, reducible to no system, and depending principally upon custom and the terms of charters. In some cases the freeholders in burgage-tenure returned members; in others, the inhabitants at large; in others, both; in others, all the members of the corporation; in others, some only; in others, freeholders in burgage with other electors.' —*Parliaments and Councils of England*, Introd. xxv. This is probably a true account, but the editor of the volume from which the extract is taken, seems to be too much disposed to make things of this nature appear very unsettled to a late period of our history. It has been justly said, that it is well for Englishmen that the question whether they are to have liberties or not, is not a question to be decided by a jury of antiquaries.

larger body. The transition, it will be seen, was not difficult, from such conferences in many places, to a concentration of them for the common object in one place. Indeed, after the accession of Henry III. the assessing of the counties ceased to devolve upon the judges on circuit, and passed into the hands of four knights freely chosen for that service in the county court. On the authority of the Oxford parliament of 1258, moreover, every county might instruct its four knights to inquire into grievances, and to submit the result to parliament.* When Henry was about to sail on his expedition into Gascony, he required each county to send two discreet knights to meet him and his parliament at Westminster. The business of these two knights was to confer with the knights from the other counties, as to the aid which should be granted to the king.† In these instances we see the approaches gradually made towards a definite and settled representation of the commons in relation to taxation, which was the next step to such a representation for the purposes of legislation.

Rising influence of towns.

Of course, the progress of commerce and the increase of towns, of which we have spoken elsewhere, contributed to this result. John replenished his exchequer by adding to the number of towns which should possess the privilege of choosing their own magistrates; and in the prosperity of these incipient hives of English industry we may see a main cause of the great political precedent supplied by Montfort's par-

* The ordinance of this parliament was that, 'in every county, four 'discreti et legales milites' shall be chosen, who are to enquire into grievances, and upon oath make a report on the same; which report, sealed with their own seal and that of the county, is to be personally delivered by the sheriffs to the parliament to be holden at Westminster.'—*Parl. and Councils of England*, Henry III. 1258. The barons in this parliament went so far as to require that there should be three parliaments in a year, and chose twelve 'honest men' to meet the said parliaments on behalf of 'the community of the land.'—Ibid. This was seven years before the convening of Leicester's parliament.

† Prynne's *Register*.

liament, and of the influence of that precedent on after times.

Popular affection for the memory of Leicester.

Leicester hoped, no doubt, so to strengthen his position by this expedient as to be able to subdue the enemies opposed to him. But this supposition does not necessarily detract either from his patriotism or from his sagacity. A patriot might have deemed the thing done a right thing to do; and a statesman might have concluded that the right time for doing it had come. It is certain that the people generally saw the proceeding in this light. Dishonours and spoliations came thickly upon Leicester and his followers; but in the esteem of the 'baron's party,' as they were called, that is, of nearly the whole commonalty of the land, Montfort was not only a patriot, but a saint and a martyr, and Heaven bore witness to the justice of his policy by the miracles which took place at his tomb. So men felt and spoke through more than one generation. The fact is suggestive. It shows that the popular love of liberty was taking a more practical shape, as well as a deeper root. The people were beginning to see where their weakness lay; and the memory of Leicester was the more precious to them because one of his latest acts had been to point to the quarter to which they should look for strength.

Edward I. —his policy in relation to parliament.

It was not to be expected that Edward I. who had been in arms against Leicester, would be found eager to act on a precedent which owed its origin to his authority. It is not until 1283, ten years after his accession, that the first move in this direction is made. In that year, to obtain the aid necessary to the prosecution of his war against the Welsh, the king convened a sort of parliament, consisting of the clergy and the commons only, omitting the lords. The representatives of the commons in this instance consisted of four knights for each county, and two representatives from every city, borough, and market town. But travelling in those days being so slow and difficult, the kingdom was mapped out into three districts,

and the commons and clergy assembled according to the king's writ in three places. The first division met in Northampton, the second in York, the third in Durham. The king was in Wales; but his commissioners were present at the opening of each of these meetings. A certain grant of money being agreed upon, the business of these conventions was at an end, and clergy and commoners returned to their homes. The barons, we may presume, were mostly on military service with the king.*

In a few months the war in Wales came to a close. Edward summoned a parliament to meet at Shrewsbury; but not more than twenty cities or towns were required to send representatives on that occasion. The writs in this case were sent to the officers of the borough, not to the sheriff of the county. The lords sat in Shrewsbury; the commons and the clergy in Acton Burnet. This sitting at Acton Burnet is memorable, inasmuch as there the English House of Commons began to concern itself with legislation. An act was there passed to give facility to creditors in recovering their debts.†

Five parliaments, however, were subsequently convened, without including any representation from the commons. It is not until 1295 that the commons are summoned in the form which served to fix the constitutional usage in relation to them. On that occasion, writs were sent to a hundred and twenty cities

* Hody's *Convocations*, 372–382. Lingard, iii. 334. The writs issued in this instance were not to the cities and towns separately, but to the sheriffs, who were to send men with full power from 'every city, borough, and market town.'

† *Parl. Hist.* i. The act was known as 'The Statute Merchant for the Recovery of Debts.'—*Statutes at Large.* Rymer, i. 247. The following are the twenty towns to which writs were sent:—*Winchester, Newcastle-on-Tyne, York, Bristol, Exeter, Lincoln, Canterbury, Carlisle, Norwich, Northampton, Nottingham, Scarborough, Grimsby, Lynn, Colchester, Yarmouth, Hereford, Chester, Shrewsbury,* and *Worcester.*—Anderson's *Hist. Com.* i. 131. *Parl. and Councils of England,* Edward I.

and boroughs. Most of these sent their representatives; a few pleaded great poverty, and begged to be saved the expense. Twelve parliaments, including such representatives of town and county, were convened during this reign. The aids granted by the commons were generally a third more than those granted by the lords—a fact which indicates both the kind and degree of social progress which was taking place at that time in England.* In these liberal ministrations to his wants, Edward found reason enough to reconcile him to this new policy. The commons, at the same time, were alive to the advantage of being able to confer together about their common grievances, and to combine in making redress more or less the condition of supplies. From the progress of this new—this money power, Edward was strongly inclined to overlook the peculiarities of feudal tenures, in favour of the money contributions which came from all property alike.

Edward's embarrassments and arbitrary measures.

Had Edward I. been disposed towards a pacific and economical policy, his sagacity might have enabled him to tide over the events of his reign without the aid of parliament in any other form than had been familiar to his predecessors. But the passions of the king, and the necessities of his exchequer, were favourable to the liberties of the people. Edward I. was a prince of military tastes, resolved to subdue Wales and Scotland, and to make his power felt in connexion with his possessions on the Continent. But such a policy could not be sustained without a well-furnished exchequer; and to secure that object, it became necessary that frequent appeals should be made to parliament, and, at length, that parliament should be allowed to represent the wealth of the commoner, no less than that of the noble. We must add, that the public acts of this king were too often unscrupulous and unjust;

* *Parl. Hist.* i. 38–56. *Rolls Parl.* Ed. I. *Parl. and Councils of England*, 51–69.

and it was one of the subtle elements of his rule to make his parliaments share, as far as possible, in the responsibility of such deeds.

It is not, however, until Edward has been king nearly a quarter of a century that he convenes the parliament of 1295, which may be said to present the first duly recognised action of our present constitution, as consisting of king, lords, and commons. The measures of the king during the years which preceded this event were often in a high degree arbitrary; and in subsequent years his policy showed too great a readiness to return to such expedients for obtaining money. But, happily, in these later years, the strong hand of the sovereign had to compete with the strong hand elsewhere. Great was the discontent, both in town and country. By his own authority the king raised the duties on exports, especially on the two chief articles, wool and leather. In one instance, the 'Merchants of the Staple' were required to lend the entire value of the wools they were about to export; in another, the whole stock was seized and converted into money for the king's use. In the same spirit, the English landholders were called upon to furnish large supplies of cattle and corn, to sustain an army in Guienne. It is true, this last demand was made with the promise of payment; but the creditor in this case was not one to be easily sued, and the proceeding was felt to be vexatious and dangerous.*

Resisted by the earls of Hereford and Norfolk.

It was when such measures had put men upon those private conferences about their common wrongs which are the natural precursors to open resistance, that Edward meditated sailing with an army to Flanders, and sending another to Guienne—the latter under the command of Bohun, earl of Hereford, and Bigod, earl of Norfolk. But these noblemen were among the chief malcontents, though the first was constable of England, the second lord mareschal. Both declined

* Heming. 110, 111. Knight. 2501. Walsing. 69. Dunstap. v. 418.

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the service assigned them, on the plea that they were not bound to serve out of the kingdom, except with the king in person. Edward grew angry, and in the height of his passion said to Bigod, 'By the Eternal, 'sir earl, you shall go or hang!' The mareschal instantly replied, 'By the Eternal, sir king, I will 'neither go nor hang!' The two earls immediately withdrew, and are said to have left the court at the head of some fifteen hundred knights.*

The king appeals to the citizens.

The aspect of affairs which now opened upon the king was serious. But Edward decided promptly on the course to be taken. That he might be in a condition to humble the constable and the mareschal, great effort was made to conciliate parties to whom he had often given deep umbrage by his arbitrary appropriations of their substance. The clergy had suffered often and grievously at his hands; but to clergy, to merchants, and to all parties aggrieved, his professions were now those of sorrow that his necessities should have been such as to have compelled him to resort to measures which could hardly have been so painful to others as they were to himself. His faults in this respect, he acknowledged, had been manifold, but they might be sure there would be no return of them. It was to this effect that the king addressed a large assembly of citizens from a platform in the front of Westminster Hall. At his side stood the young prince, whom, as the heir apparent, he commended to their loyal protection, should it be the will of Providence to number himself with the slain in the intended expedition. At this point the speaker burst into tears; all were moved; and the faults of the king seemed for the moment to have been wholly forgotten by his subjects in their sympathy with the father and the man. Edward accepted their loud acclamations as the pledge of reconciliation.†

* Heming. 112.

† Rymer, ii. 783. Matt. West. ad ann. 1297. The following are the king's words as given by Westminster: 'Behold! I, who being about

The king now ventured to set sail for Flanders. But he did so with some misgiving. Some of the most powerful among his subjects addressed to him a formal remonstrance, and did not hesitate to describe the enterprise as unnecessary, improvident, and hazardous to the peace and safety of the realm.

The Londoners side with the earls.

On the third day after Edward's departure the earls of Hereford and Norfolk presented themselves before the barons of the exchequer, to whom they stated in detail the grievances which the nation had suffered from the hands of the king, and forbade them, in the name of the barons of England, to attempt to collect the eighth granted in the last parliament, the said grant having been made without the knowledge of themselves and their friends, who should have been privy to it. From the Exchequer the earls rode to the Guildhall, where the citizens, notwithstanding the scene so recently witnessed in Westminster, gave the malcontent chiefs an enthusiastic reception. All were agreed in regarding the grievances of the nation as enormous, and in the necessity of imposing some powerful restraint on the despotic tendencies of the crown. The military array of the earls in these proceedings was great; but the public peace was not broken. The men in mail, and the men of traffic and handicraft, feudality and citizenship, were at one on that day.*

Parliament passes the statute *De Tallagio non Concedendo.*

Edward was soon apprised of these proceedings. But his commands to his ministers not to heed the prohibitions of the constable and mareschal were without effect. The discontent expressed by those noblemen was the feeling common to all classes, from the highest to the lowest. The course of the war, moreover, was not favourable. The king of France was at the head of a force which Edward dared not encounter;

to expose myself to danger for your sakes, do beg of you, if I return, to receive me as you now receive me, and I will restore to you all that I have taken from you. And if I do not return, then I beg of you to crown my son as your king.'

* Wals. 72. Knighton, 2512. Heming. 117. Westmin. ad ann. 1297.

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nor could he retreat with honour from the position he had taken. In this exigency, the council, to whose care the kingdom had been committed, summoned the earls of Hereford and Norfolk, and a number of prelates and barons, to a conference; this conference was preliminary to a parliament; and by this parliament the following important provisions, submitted by the conference, were enthusiastically adopted, as additions to the Magna Charta, and the Charter of the Forests.

'No manner of tax or aid shall either be imposed 'or gathered by us or our heirs, for the future, in our 'kingdom, without the common consent and free will 'of the archbishops, bishops, and other prelates, the 'earls, barons, knights, burgesses, and other freemen 'of this realm. We will not take to ourself any corn, 'wool, hides, or any other kind of goods whatsoever, 'without the consent of the person to whom such 'goods belong. We will not take for the future, in 'any name, or on any occasion whatsoever, evil toll* 'on any pack of wool. We will and grant, for us 'and our heirs, that all the clergy and laity of the 'kingdom shall have all their laws, liberties, and 'customs as freely and fully as ever they enjoyed 'them at any time. And if anything be enacted or 'ordained against any article in this present writing 'by us or our ancestors, or by any new customs in-'troduced, we will and grant that such customs or 'statutes be for ever null and void.

'We do remit also to Humphry de Bohun, earl of 'Hereford and Essex, constable of England; Roger 'Bigod, earl of Norfolk, mareschal of England, and 'others, the earls, barons, knights, esquires, and to 'John de Ferrars, and to all others his colleagues and 'confederates, and also to all those who hold 20*l.* lands, 'either of us in chief or of others in our kingdom, 'who were summoned to go into Flanders and did not 'appear, all manner of rancour and ill-will which for

* A tax of 40*s.* on every pack of wool exported.

'the aforesaid causes we might have taken against them; and also all kinds of transgressions which to us or ours may have been done, to the making of this present writing.

'And for the greater security of this matter, we will and grant, for us and our heirs, that all archbishops and bishops of England shall for ever in their cathedral churches have the present writing read, and shall publicly excommunicate there, as well as cause to be excommunicated in the several parish churches throughout their diocese, twice in a year, all those who shall seek to weaken the force of these presents in any manner whatsoever. In testimony of which we have put our seal to this present writing, together with the seals of the archbishops, bishops, earls, barons, and others, who of their own accord swore to observe strictly the tenor of these presents, in all and every article, to the best of their power. And for the due observance of which they promised all their aid and advice for ever.'*

Such is the memorable statute *De Tallagio non Concedendo*. Its great aim, as will be seen, was to give a fuller security to the property of the subject. It made the king dependent for every branch of revenue, apart from the rents of the royal demesne, on the suffrage of parliament—and of a parliament consisting of the baronage of England, and of representatives from the commons in county, city, and borough.

Deep was the reluctance of the king to attach his signature to this instrument. But his embarrassments in the Netherlands were watched by the Scots, who seized the moment, after their manner, to make incursions into the northern counties. The prince and his council, moreover, had been parties to the framing of this instrument, and joined in urging the king to accept it. In that event, the clergy and laity were prepared to vote large supplies; and the barons and

* *Parl. Hist.* i. 45, 46.

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their followers were ready, either to join the king in Flanders, or to compel the Scots to find other employment. But an answer was required, in decisive terms, by a given day. By that day, after a costly struggle, Edward attached his name and seal to the document.*

Edward's aims to evade it.

The value of this statute must not be viewed as relating simply to the greater security of property. To restrict the power of the crown in that direction, was to restrict it in every other. Parliament, in becoming the guardian of the public purse, became the guardian of the public liberty. To control the exchequer, was to have control over the sinews both of war and government. To the king this was sufficiently clear; and his majesty gave abundant evidence afterwards of an intention to undo if possible all that had been done. First, it was rumoured that the king spoke of his oath as invalid, from its being exacted from him in a foreign land, where he had no authority, and was not in possession of his full liberty of action. Next, a succession of attempts was made to evade the confirmation of the statute after his return to this country. When all these expedients had failed, and the statute was at length confirmed as it stood, it was with the addition of a clause touching the supposed rights of the crown, which virtually annulled all that the document had been designed to secure as right to the subject. The earls of Hereford and Norfolk and their adherents, expressed their amazement and indignation, and withdrew from court and parliament.

The Londoners resist his policy.

Edward flattered himself that the citizens of London would not be found so clear-sighted in these matters as the barons. The sheriffs were instructed to convene the Londoners in the crypt of St. Paul's, and there to read the statute in their hearing. As passage after passage was read, the crypt resounded

* Matt. West. ad ann. 1297. Heming. 138 et seq. Knight. 2522. Walsing. 73, 74. *Parl. Hist.* i. 46.

with applause. But when the clause at the end came, the scene at once changed. The attempted fraud was seen at a glance, and the expressions of disapprobation were as loud, as the expressions of approval had been before. Edward's last move had thus failed. He immediately convened a new parliament, in which his assent was given to the statute without reservation.* The statute becomes law.

But even yet, there was duplicity somewhere. The government officials knew the law, but, from some cause, presumed to ignore it. They acted in many cases as in former times. Complaints on this ground in the next parliament were bitter. To silence them, the king consented, not only to renew his pledge to abide by the provisions of the new statute, but, to ensure its better observance, agreed that it should be publicly read, together with Magna Charta and the Forest Charter, in the sheriff's court, four times in the year, and that three knights in each county, to be chosen by the freeholders, should be commissioned to punish all persons convicted of violating the said premises in any way.† Further precautions to secure it.

For the present the king deemed it prudent to dissemble. But his purpose to make the parties who had so far prevailed against him feel the effects of his displeasure was never relinquished. Three years later the Scots were subdued, his affairs generally became more prosperous, and the moment seemed to have come in which to put forth his hand as an avenger. The earl of Hereford was dead; but his son was summoned to resign his estates into the hands of the king; and though they were restored, it was on such conditions, that they soon afterwards fell to the crown. Bohun, the lord mareschal, was humbled and wronged in a similar manner, together with Winchelsey, archbishop of Canterbury, and many more, who were Edward's revenge and perfidy.

* Heming. 159–168. Wals. 76. West. ad ann. 1298.
† Stat. 28 Ed. I. 3.

charged with having been parties to the alleged conspiracy against the king while absent in Flanders.* All this was done in unblushing violation of an oath, solemnly taken, and often repeated.†

Edward released from his oath by the pope.

It is now known, that in 1304, Edward opened a correspondence with the pope to obtain a formal dispensation from the pledges by which he had bound himself; and that the dispensation was granted, though, from causes which can now be only matter of conjecture, the instrument was never made public.‡

Infraction of the statute.

Another measure, which dates from the king's successes in Scotland in the same year, was his levying a tallage on all his demesne lands and towns without consent of parliament, as though the *De Tallagio non Concedendo* were not in existence. His manner of silencing the complaints of the barons, in the next parliament, was by telling them that they were free to levy a similar tax on the lands and towns subject to themselves. Of such a complexion was the patriotism of Edward I.—better his barons should be left to plunder at will, than that he should not himself be allowed that liberty.

Political life in England under Edward I.

But Edward I. died, and the law which declared that the nation should be in no way taxed without its consent, a law given in a free parliament, remained on the statute book.§ On the death of this king, nearly a century had passed since the germ of this law found its place for the first time in our history, as one of the provisions of Magna Charta. But we may say that two great principles—taxation solely by authority of

* Brady's *Complete Hist.* iii. 74–76. West. ad ann. 1305.

† Westminster recounts these proceedings as bespeaking clemency, seeing nothing of the perfidy! Archbishop Winchelsey appears to have given special umbrage to the king. 'I know the pride of thy heart,' said Edward, 'thy rebellion and cunning; for thou hast always acted contentiously towards me.' But Dr. Lingard is right in saying, that Englishmen owe hardly less to archbishop Winchelsey, and to the earls of Hereford and Norfolk, than to archbishop Langton and the barons at Runnymead. —*Hist.* iii. 353 et seq.

‡ Rymer, ii. 972–978.

§ Stat. 34 Ed. I. 5.

parliament, and the representation of the commons as essential to the constitution of a parliament, were recognised for all time to come in the reign of the first Edward. English liberty, indeed, was nothing to that monarch. He ceded no vestige of it willingly. He would have crushed it in all its tendencies, had he been permitted. But the course of events in England had long been such as to train the people in political knowledge; and the two principles above mentioned, which the policy of this king had tended to make so precious, may be said to have embodied two of the weighty lessons which the nation had now thoroughly learnt

With these new ideas, property seems to acquire a new sacredness, and law a new authority. Neither the kings of England, nor the baronage of England, may henceforth touch the property or the person of the Englishman except according to law. The law takes precedence of both. Both owe to it obedience—all owe to it obedience. Knight and baron, burgess and freeholder, subject and sovereign, have their ground in this respect in common. According to maxims which have now become accredited and familiar, will is nowhere law, but law is everywhere in the place of will. The English yeomen of those days, and many below them, thought, and spoke, and debated concerning these maxims. So did the merchants in their guilds; and so did the men of handicraft when they gathered about their homely hearths, when they met in their local courts, or assembled as fraternities in the manner then common to men following the same calling or 'mystery.' The educating power of such influences might be seen everywhere. To congregate was to learn, and there was scarcely any other way of learning. Even in the universities, more knowledge was obtained from the lips of living men than from books. And there could be no greater mistake than to suppose, that the people of England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries,

cared little about politics. Concerning politics as a theory or a science they thought little, but concerning government as a matter immediately affecting their personal liberty and personal gains they were keen observers and keen disputants. The question of government was with them, more sensibly than with us, a question of profit and loss, of life and death. It determined what might or might not be accounted as their own; and what they might or might not be made to do or to endure. The portly merchants, and the crowds of tradesmen and artisans, who made the old arches in the crypt of St. Paul's to ring with their acclamations, as clause after clause of the statute *De Tallagio* was read, and who so quickly changed their note to that of indignation and disgust when the neutralizing clause at the end came, were clearly men to whom discussion about such questions had long been familiar. So, in part, did the political life of the English get nutriment, and develop itself in those days.

Edward's legislative measures.

Edward I. has been described as the English Justinian. It is a dishonour to the race of our Norman kings that the little done by this monarch as a law reformer should have sufficed to give him any such reputation. His statute of mortmain, and his endeavour to define the province of the ecclesiastical as distinguished from the civil courts—of which we shall speak in another place—were wise measures.* The same may be said of the law which prohibited the increase of manors.† Much petty tyranny was thus checked. The manors of England are now as determined at that time. But this is nearly the extent of the praiseworthy accomplished by Edward I. as a legislator. His law concerning entails was of questionable utility;‡ and the other salutary enact-

* West. ad ann. 1280, 1285. Duns. 584. Wikes. 122. Stat. 18 Ed. I. 1. *Parl. Hist.* i. 35, 36.

† Stat. 18 Ed. I. 1.

‡ Stat. 13 Ed. I. 2.

ments of his reign were matters wrung from his reluctant grasp by an indignant people.

Judicial reforms.

It should be added, however, that the attempts of this king to purify the administration of law, and to uphold its authority in all cases between man and man, were his own free action, and highly commendable. In the tenth year of his reign, all the judges, with two exceptions only, were found to be grossly corrupt, selling their influence to the man offering the heaviest bribe. The delinquents were deprived of their office, and subjected to heavy fines. From this time, the judges were sworn to abstain from accepting money, or presents of any kind, beyond a breakfast, from persons having suits before them.*

Improvement of police.

With such dishonesties in high places, it is hardly surprising that the country should have been much infested with robbers. Bands of such men had their haunts in all the forest districts. To check these disorders, all boroughs were required to establish watch and ward from sunset to sunrise. It was required also, that the high roads should have a space of two hundred feet on either side cleared of trees, and of everything that might favour a sudden assault upon the traveller. To ensure the observance of these regulations, local commissioners were appointed, who became the precursors to our modern justices of the peace.†

Edward II. —Piers Gaveston.

The reign of Edward II. extends from 1307 to 1327. These twenty years give us the history of a king incapable of ruling, and of an alternating struggle between a sovereign content to be governed by favourites, and nobles who are not content that he should be in such hands. This is the political drama on which the eyes of the English people were fixed during those years. They saw the young king, on his

* *Chron.* i. Wikes. 118, 119. Duns. 873 et seq. *Parl. Hist.* i. 37, 38.

† Stat. 13 Ed. I. 2.

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accession to the throne, devoted to the companionship of a favourite named Piers de Gaveston. They saw in the royal favourite a Gascon youth of handsome presence, skilled in furnishing the weak king with amusement, in casting ridicule on his presumed rivals, and in sowing distrust and disaffection between the sovereign and the most powerful of his subjects. They learn at length that even the young queen, Isabella of France, one of the most beautiful women in Europe, is powerless with her husband in comparison with this court minion. They note the utterances of discontent as they become daily more general and more loud. They listen to the latest rumours about certain meetings of nobles and their followers at Ware and at Northampton, about the barons as having constrained the king to convene a parliament, in which grave inquiry will be made into the late proceedings of the government. To that parliament they send their knights and burgesses; and thence the report comes to them that divers articles of accusation are being urged against the favourite; such as that he has abused the king's ear so as to obtain immoderate grants to himself; that he has embezzled the treasures of the kingdom; that he has taken the best jewels of the crown to his own use; that, raised as he now is above the most ancient nobility of the land, his father had suffered as a traitor, his mother had been burnt as a witch, and he had himself been banished as implicated in her machinations—machinations of the sort which could alone account for his present influence over the mind of the king. The expectation is, that the power of the favourite, under the weight of such charges, must soon come to an end. But the king struggles hard to save him. He would have the differences between himself and the barons settled by arbitration. But the fitting men shrink from the responsibility. The barons insist that Gaveston shall leave the kingdom, and the report now is, that Edward has consented to his banishment. The favourite embarks at

Bristol. But the king accompanies him to that place. The barons soon learn, to their no small mortification, that Gaveston has only left England for Ireland, where Edward has made him his representative. Such are the political contentions which chafe men's spirits at the commencement of this reign.*

Parliament of 1309.

The parliament which secured the banishment of Gaveston was convened in the spring of 1308; another was assembled in the spring of the following year. In this interval, enough had happened to foreshadow the disorders which would prove inseparable from the rule of such a monarch. The commons were full of grievances, the lords not less so; and both were resolved on seeking the reformation of abuses, and on doing what might be done towards guarding the subject against the mischiefs to be apprehended from the sovereign power in hands so little entitled to their confidence.

Remonstrance of the commons.

The commons presented a remonstrance to the king, in which they complain that clerks had not been appointed, as in the last reign, to receive their petitions; that new duties had been levied on cloth, wine, and other imports, raising the price one-third; that his majesty's purveyors seized on all kinds of provisions at their pleasure, without giving the required security for payment; that the goods taken by the officers of the king's household for his use in fairs and markets were inordinate, and that the residue was sold by the said officers for their own advantage; and that the coin of the realm had been debased so as to have raised the price of all commodities. The commons go on to say, that in addition to these fiscal grievances, they have a right to complain of many things which interfered with the due administration of the law; of the stewards and mareschals of the king's household, who entertained pleas that did not

* Rymer, iv. 63 et seq. *Parl. Hist.* i. 57, 58. Stowe, *Hist.* 213. Wals. 96.

pertain to them, and exercised their authority in places beyond the bounds of their jurisdiction; of the king himself, who, by means of writs under the privy seal, often defrauded parties in civil suits of their rights, and afforded even to felons the means of escape from the punishment due to their crimes; and of certain barons, who set up courts of judicature at their castle gates without authority, to the disparagement of the king's courts, and to the great harm of the king's subjects.*

The topics of this remonstrance make us acquainted with the notions, and something more, which possessed the minds of the good knights and burgesses, who took to their saddles in the springtime of 1309, that they might duly make their appearance in parliament, as representatives of the counties and towns of England. On these matters we must suppose that they muse as they travel alone; talk as they fall in with each other on the way; and confer more formally when gathered in force at the place of meeting. Through the articles of this petition we see into some of the evils then prevalent; and in the tone of the document we may discern something concerning the stage of political insight and feeling to which the English people generally had then attained. The king promised, after some hesitation, that the prayer of the petition should be attended to in all its particulars. The promise, however, concerning the new duty on imports, was soon forgotten.†

Return of Gaveston.

Gaveston was banished in the summer of 1308. During the next twelve months the king endeavoured to add to the number of his friends, and at the close of that interval deemed himself strong enough to venture on a recall of the favourite. The re-appearance of Gaveston brought with it new signs of disaffection. In two instances, the barons refused to obey the king's

* *Rot. Parl.* i. 441. Prynne's *Register*, 68.
† Ibid.

summons to attend him in parliament, on the plea that their persons would not be safe in so doing while so much power was in the hands of Gaveston. When it was announced that the favourite had withdrawn to a distance, the barons assembled, but appeared, contrary to the command of the king, followed by their retainers.

The Committee of Ordainers.

The first measure of this parliament was to appoint a committee which should be empowered to adopt such regulations for the better government, both of the king's household and of the nation, as should appear to them expedient. This committee has been described as the Committee of 'Ordainers,' from the ordinances issued by them for this purpose. It consisted of eight prelates, the same number of earls, and thirteen barons. It was to cease at the end of twelve months, and was not to be drawn into a precedent that should be in any way injurious to the rights of the crown. This whole proceeding was described as an arrangement which had originated in the free choice of the sovereign—a statement, we must suppose, to which no one gave credence.*

Ordinances of the Ordainers.

The king soon absented himself from London, where the Ordainers held their meetings. He collected an army in the north, was there joined by Gaveston, and then marched into Scotland. In the meanwhile, the committee in London digested a series of articles, forty-one in number, designed to correct existing abuses, and to guard against their recurrence. These articles included many grievances which the king had already promised should cease. The novelties in this memorable schedule may be said to have been confined to the clauses which provided that such of the king's purveyors as should exceed their lawful commission should be pursued by hue and cry, and *dealt with as robbers;* that the wardens of the Cinque Ports, and the governors of any foreign land subject

* *Rot. Parl.* i. 445. Rymer, iii. 200 et seq. *Parl. Hist.* i. 58, 59.

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to the king, should be chosen by the king *with the advice of his barons in parliament;* that the sheriffs of counties should receive their commission under the great seal, but should *be appointed by the principal officers of state,* including the four justices of the King's Bench; that the king should not *leave the kingdom,* nor *declare war,* without *the consent of his barons in parliament;* and that in such case the said barons should make provision for the safety of the kingdom.

These are the provisions in this document which trench most on the power of the crown as hitherto exercised. The remaining articles of this tendency relate to the conduct of the king towards Gaveston and others, who were charged with exercising an undue influence over him. All grants made to lord Beaumont, and his sister lady Vesey, were declared void, and it was required that those persons should no more be seen within the limits of the court. The same was determined concerning the succession of grants made to Gaveston; and, inasmuch as the said Piers Gaveston had given evil counsel to the king, had sown seeds of distrust and alienation between him and his faithful subjects, had appropriated large sums of public money to his own use, had possessed himself of blank charters with the royal seal, to fill up and distribute at his pleasure, and had gone so far as to form an association of persons sworn to protect him against all men—it was required that the said Piers Gaveston should be banished, and that the day of his departure should not be postponed beyond the first day of November next. To all these demands Edward found himself obliged to assent. But he did so under a protest in favour of the rights of the crown, which sufficed to show that the oath so taken would be repudiated on the first convenient occasion.*

On the first of November a sorrowful parting took

* Rymer, iii. 337. *Rot. Parl.* 281. *Parl. Hist.* i. 59, 60. Walsing. 98, 99. Brady's *Hist.* Ap.

place between Edward and Gaveston. Two months afterwards the favourite was recalled, and the king issued a proclamation declaring the innocence of the banished man, and his readiness to meet the charges preferred against him.

Civil war.

This proceeding led to civil war. The king, however, dared not face the barons, led as they were by his cousin, the powerful earl of Lancaster. Gaveston fled for refuge to the castle of Scarborough. The fortifications of the place were not such as to promise him security. On certain conditions he surrendered himself into the hands of his enemies. From Scarborough he was conducted to Warwick. In the castle of that place the barons conferred in regard to the fate of their victim.

The fate of Gaveston.

Gaveston was not only an accomplished man—he had given proofs of military skill and courage. In the holiday passages at arms common in those days, he had triumphed over four nobles, one of whom was Lancaster himself. But the knight did not bear his faculties meekly. His imprudence kept pace with that of the king. The latter, it was clear, could never be separated from this man, nor be prevented heaping upon him new wealth and honours; the former exasperated his opponents from day to day by his ostentations, and by the sarcasms and nicknames which he flung at them. To the earl of Pembroke he gave the name of 'Joseph the Jew;' the earl of Gloucester was 'the cuckold's bird;' the earl of Warwick, was 'the black dog of the wood;' and Lancaster was 'the old hog.' In the council at Warwick Castle, one speaker urged that the life of the prisoner should be spared; no unreasonable counsel, bearing in mind the promise made on his surrender. But the 'black dog' had vowed that the man who gave him that *soubriquet* should some day 'feel his teeth;' and a voice responded to the voice which counselled mercy, 'You 'have caught the fox; to let him go will be to have to 'hunt him again.' The voice of the last speaker pre-

vailed. It was decided, accordingly, that one of the late ordinances, said to be applicable to his case, should be acted upon, and that Gaveston should die. The unhappy man cast himself at the feet of Lancaster, and implored earnestly for his life; but it was in vain. His head was the price of his follies. This happened in July. In the following October a sort of reconciliation took place between the king and the barons.*

During the next nine years, the whole country was much harassed by wars with the Scots and the Irish, which at length brought in famine and pestilence. Law and order came almost to an end.

The Spencers—the barons again in arms.

Some while after the death of Gaveston, his place in the affections of the king was gradually supplied by a youth named Hugh Spencer. The new favourite was of an ancient family, but shared in the jealousy and resentment incurred by his predecessor. In 1321, he attempted to take possession of an estate in one of the March districts, in a manner which seemed to menace the liberties claimed by those who dwelt on such lands. The lords of the Marches in the neighbourhood, summoned their retainers, and entering the estates of Hugh Spencer, and of his father, plundered and destroyed wherever they came. Lancaster and his faction were induced to join the insurgents, and the two parties pledged themselves to remain together until the banishment of the Spencers, father and son, should be secured. In this object they were successful —successful by pure intimidation. The only offence of the elder Spencer appears to have been that he was the father of the younger. Both were absent from the country on the king's service when this movement against them took place, and both were condemned without a hearing.†

* Rym. iii. 287 et seq. Wals. 98–101. *Parl. Hist.* i. 59, 60. Brady, *Hist.* iii. ubi supra.

† *Rot. Parl.* iii. 361 et seq. *Parl. Hist.* i. 70, 71. Wals. 113, 114. A translation of the written impeachment preferred against them, from the old French, is given in the *Parl. Hist.* i. 67–70.

It happened at this juncture, that the queen intimated her intention to pass a night at the castle of Ledes, on her way from Canterbury to London. But the lady Bradlesmere, in possession of the castle, refused her admission; which led to an encounter between her retainers and the garrison.*

The battle of Boroughbridge.

These deeds of turbulence and insult on the part of the barons' faction spread distrust and alarm. Reactionary feeling became prevalent. The king soon found himself in a position to take the field against his enemies; and the battle of Boroughbridge gave the most powerful of them into his hands. The great earl of Lancaster, the possessor of five earldoms, perished by decapitation. Fourteen bannerets were hanged, drawn, and quartered; fourteen knights suffered the same punishment. Many more were subjected to mitigated penalties. The licence and severity of the barons' party brought these calamities upon them. But the king, by these sanguinary proceedings, prepared the way for that revulsion in the opposite direction which ended in his imprisonment, his deposition, and his death.†

Parliament—the ordinances rescinded.

Immediately after the victory at Boroughbridge, Edward assembled a parliament, in which all that had been done by the 'Ordainers' contrary to the alleged rights of the crown in past time, was rescinded. It was enacted, also, that such changes should not be attempted in future by means of any such delegation; but that all laws affecting 'the estate of the crown or of the people' should be the act of the king, and of the prelates, earls, barons, and commonalty assembled in parliament.‡ The Spencers were recalled; but it was only that the younger, emulating the imprudence of Gaveston, should share in his fate, and contribute to the fall of his sovereign, and the ruin of his own family.

* *Parl. Hist.* i. 114, 115. Rymer, 897, 898.

† Knighton, 2540. Wals. 115, 116. Rym. 907–940. Leland, *Coll.* ii. 464 et seq.

‡ *Parl. Hist.* i. 76.

Deposition of the king.

Edward II. was neither a vicious man nor an arbitrary sovereign. The evils which came upon himself and upon his kingdom during his reign, were the result mainly of his narrow self-will—of the kind of obstinacy which is often allied with weakness. His propensity to give his heart to some one person, to the neglect of his subjects generally, and even of his queen, exhibited a mixture of incapacity and perverseness which became at length unendurable. His barons were haughty and turbulent; but his conduct was such as to offend the pride he should have soothed, to provoke the turbulence he should have allayed. It was manifest that his personal gratifications were the one object of his affections; and to this frivolous selfishness in the king we have to trace the signal want of loyalty in his subjects, and of affection even in his own family.

Edward III.

The parliament which deposed Edward II. recognised his son prince Edward as his successor. The prince was fourteen years of age on his accession. During the minority of the young king, Isabella, the queen-mother, and Roger, lord Mortimer, were in virtual possession of the sovereignty. It is not to be doubted that the conduct of the late king towards Isabella had been such as to wound her womanly pride, and could hardly have failed to alienate her affections. Towards the close of the last reign the queen had taken her place openly on the side of the disaffected; and her intimacy with Mortimer, the leader of the insurgents, though innocent for a while, became in the end a scandal to the court and the nation. At the expiration of three years the young king began to feel his thraldom. The jealous nobles were quite ready to aid him in bringing it to a close.

Fall of Mortimer.

In the autumn of 1330, a parliament was convened in Nottingham. Measures were there taken to seize the person of Mortimer. The charges brought against him were, that he had assumed functions which the parliament had assigned to a committee; that the

late earl of Kent, uncle to the king, had been executed, through his influence, without just cause; that he had subjected the king to the watchings of spies; and, above all, that he had removed the late king from Kenilworth, the residence selected for him by the estates of the realm, and had then caused him to be put to death. Mortimer suffered as a traitor; and Isabella spent the remaining twenty-seven years of her life under a respectful oversight in the castle of Risings.*

During a reign of fifty years Edward III. summoned no less than seventy parliaments. His wars in Scotland and in France compelled him, as we have elsewhere seen, to make frequent application for aid to his subjects; and one effect of this course of events was, to give a more matured and settled form to the constitution and the usages of parliament.

Settled complexion of parliament.

The time had now irrevocably passed in which a parliament could be supposed to be constituted of less than the three estates—the clergy, the lords, and the commons. These estates assembled and deliberated apart. The clergy were chiefly occupied with questions relating to the church; the commons with measures affecting industry and trade; while the lords took a somewhat higher range, and were the great authority, next to the crown, in all secular legislation. The clergy convened with each parliament consisted of the prelates, and of others representing the chapters, the religious orders, and the inferior clergy.† The lords con-

* *Parl. Hist.* i. 81–87.

† 'It is now, perhaps, scarcely known by many persons not unversed in the constitution of their country, that, besides the bishops and baronial abbots, the inferior clergy were regularly summoned to every Parliament. In the writ of summons to a bishop, he is still directed to cause the dean of his cathedral church, the archdeacon of his diocese, and one proctor from the chapter of the former, and two from the body of his clergy, to attend with him at the place of meeting.'—Hallam, *Middle Ages*, iii. 194, 195. The summons to parliament is readily distinguishable from a summons to convocation, as the convocations were provincial. This representation of the commons among the clergy may be traced as far back as 1255, and was one, probably, of the many causes which served to prepare the way for a house of commons for the laity.

sisted of barons who sat by their own right as such; and of barons by writ, who were dependent for their right to be present on a special summons from the crown. It is probable that the latter class was restricted to men holding lands by a baronial tenure. The barons by writ became few before the close of the reign of Edward III., and cease to exist soon afterwards. Bannerets appear to have been occasionally summoned to the House of Lords until a somewhat later period.* The commons reckoned seventy-four knights as the representatives of counties, and a number of burgesses, which varied according to exigencies, or the place of meeting. These two classes now formed one assembly, separate from the lords and from the clergy.† It is to this union between the representatives of landholders, or the gentry, in counties, and the representatives of trade in towns, and to the fact that these two classes of representatives formed one separate assembly, that we have in great part to attribute the permanence and the growing power which has characterized this branch of our legislature. The wealth represented by the burgesses gave them weight in that form; and the higher rank and intelligence of their colleagues from the counties, gave to their joint action weight of another kind. By degrees, the middle element blended itself almost equally with the peerage above and with the commonalty below. We should add, that the expenses of both classes—of what

* Hallam, *Middle Ages*, iii. 187, 188.

† *Rot. Parl.* ii. 64, 66, 69, 104. Lingard, *Hist.* iv. 164. The fact that every record of grants made in parliament, from the time it is made to consist of three estates, is the record of grants made by each estate separately, warrants the presumption that the commons were wont to assemble as a body distinct both from the lords and the clergy from the beginning. It is certain that this was the usage in the early part of the reign of Edward III. The prelates, however, sat as lords in parliament; but the estate of the clergy is said to have abstained from voting on secular questions.—Lingard, iv. 157, 158. In the last year of Edward III. the commons pray that no tax may be laid on certain commodities without 'assent of the *prelates*, dukes, earls, barons, and commons.'—*Parl. Hist.* i. 146.

we should call county members and borough members —were defrayed, according to law, by their constituents. The burgess received two shillings a day, the knight four—that is, at the rate of somewhat more than two and four pounds a day of our money.*

Usage of parliament—growing power of the commons.

The process of legislation was simple. Of the lords and commons, either might propose a law, but the assent of the other, and of the crown, was necessary to its becoming law. It was not probable that the lower house would attempt to legislate for the upper. But as little was it permitted to the upper house to legislate for the lower. In the nineteenth year of his reign, when in the zenith of his power, Edward called on every landholder to supply him with archers, horsemen, or money, according to his means. The commons petitioned the king to withdraw this demand, on the ground that it had not been made with their sanction. The king answered that it had been made with the sanction of the lords, and that his necessities had rendered such a supply indispensable. But such reasoning was not deemed satisfactory. The commons persisted in their protest against being bound by crown or peerage, or by both conjoined, without their own consent. Edward promised that the measure should not be construed as a precedent. But even that was insufficient, and, in the end, a statute was passed which declared, that in all time to come, ordinances so issued should be deemed contrary to the reasonable liberty of the subject.† Too often the redress

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* *Rot. Parl.* ii. 258; 441, 444. The usual time for the meeting of parliaments in those days was *eight in the morning*.—Ibid. 316.

† *Rot. Parl.* ii. 160 et seq. See also the petition of the commons in the parliament of 1348.—*Parl. Hist.* i. 116, 117. 'The course of proceedings in parliament, from the commencement at least of Edward III.'s reign, was, that the commons presented petitions, which the lords by themselves, or with the assistance of the council, having duly considered, the sanction of the king was given or withheld.'—Hallam, *Middle Ages*, iii. 161. The commons grew to be more and more solicitous to uphold this usage in regard to money bills; but in regard to other bills, it was not a uniform custom in succeeding times.—*Rot. Parl.* iii. 611.

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promised was not rendered; and the law issued differed materially from that to which the king had given his assent. But against these shameless frauds, a stringent provision was made by the commons in the twenty-seventh year of this reign.*

We have seen the reluctance with which the first Edward passed the law which made all taxation to be absolutely dependent on the consent of parliament. The third Edward was not much more reconciled in heart to that statute than the first. But if Edward III. resorted at times to forced loans, and illegal taxes, it was always under the plea of great necessity; and the validity of the law was admitted, while reasons for some exceptional neglect of it were urged. More than once, the king was obliged to recede from attempts of this nature, and the discontent and resistance called forth by such dangerous irregularities sufficed to render them of comparatively rare occurrence.†

Tenths and fifteenths.

The tenths and fifteenths, and other grants in parliament similarly designated, were a species of property tax. They were money payments, which came into the place of personal or military service. In the first instance, they were determined by the value of every man's moveables, but extended subsequently to his entire property. In the course of this reign, the inquisitorial conduct of the government officers became

* *Rot. Parl.* ii. 257.

† The rolls of parliament, for the 21st and 22nd years of Edward III., teem with these pleas of necessity on the part of the crown; and with protests against any form of taxation under such pretexts on the part of the commons. In these contests the scale turns more and more on the side of the commons.—*Parl. Hist.* i. ubi supra. Hallam, iii. 62–69. The following is the answer of Edward III. to the petition from his last parliament on this subject: 'As to the clause that no charge be laid upon the people without the commons' consent, the king is not at all willing to do it without great necessity, and for the defence of the realm, and where he may do it with reason. And as to the clause that impositions be not laid upon their wools without consent of the prelates, dukes, earls, barons, and other people of the commons of the realm, there is a statute already made which the king wills should stand in force.'—*Parl. Hist.* i. 145.

so offensive to the people, that the custom obtained of allowing towns and counties to compound with the government for a fixed sum, and then to raise the amount among themselves.*

Tonnage and poundage.

From this reign, certain duties levied by the king at the seaports, became known by the name of tonnage and poundage. By this custom, the crown obtained two shillings on every tun of wine imported, and sixpence on every pound of commodities imported or exported. Tonnage and poundage, was at first a sort of voluntary grant, made by the principal seaports to aid the king in sustaining a navy for the protection of trade, or at least to enable him to pay for the use of such ships as might be pressed into his service. It soon came to be a grant made anew by every new parliament, and retained its ancient designation long after its proceeds had ceased to be applied exclusively to their ancient uses. These duties, were in addition to the heavy tax on wools, woolfells, and hides. Attempts were made by the crown to *increase* duties of the latter kind without consent of parliament; and sometimes to impose duties on *exports* without such consent, under the plea that the increase in price in such instances fell on the consumer in other countries—as though high prices could never be supposed to act as impediments upon sales. But the commons were vigilant, and insisted on their right to control taxation in such forms, as in others.†

Further judicial reforms.

It has appeared, that to secure the passing of good laws was only one step in the direction of good government—to ensure the just administration of such laws was the next difficulty. The judges, and the officers in the different courts, were expected to make those courts serviceable to the exchequer—and we have seen that they were not less intent to derive from them supplies for their own coffers. In this

* *Rot. Parl.* ii. 447, 448.

† *Rot. Parl.* ii. 104, 160, 161, 166, 210, 273, 310, 317, 366.

reign, the salaries of the judges were raised, that they might be under less temptation to take bribes.* The sheriffs, and other responsible officers, were required to be men of property, and to be chosen annually, that so aggrieved persons might find it less difficult to obtain compensation from the authors of their grievances. The powers of the justices of the peace, moreover, were greatly enlarged; and private wars were more effectually discountenanced.† These are among the good works of the English House of Commons under Edward III. The House of Lords was more occupied with judicial than with fiscal questions, and in settling disputes among their own order, than in exposing, and providing against, the grievances of the nation. They gave their ready assent, however, for the most part, to the liberal petitions of the commons, and exercised great powers as the high judicial authority of the realm, determining the meaning of the law where the judges declined giving a decision, and correcting their decision when deemed erroneous.

The law of treason defined.

There was one statute of this period in which the lords were especially interested. This was the statute intended to determine more accurately the offences which should be adjudged as treason. The penalties of treason were the most terrible known to the law, while the law itself in this case was the most unsettled. Obnoxious persons were liable to be convicted of this heaviest of crimes, on the ground of acts which gave no warrant to such an accusation, except as construed in ways the most disingenuous and dangerous. But if this latitude in the law was deemed an evil by the

* We have seen the check given to the corruption of the judges by Edward I. In the 20th year of Edward III. it was deemed necessary to issue an ordinance to the following effect: 'That all the king's justices throughout his dominions, should renounce and utterly forbear taking any pensions, fees, or any sort of gratuities which before they used to receive, so well from lords temporal and spiritual as others, that, as their hands being free from corruption, justice might be more impartially and uprightly administered.'—*Parl. Hist.* i. 111.

† *Statutes*, 1st Ed. III. 14, 16; 2nd, 6, 7; 3rd, 4, 14; 14th, 7, 8; 20th, 4, 5, 6; 28th, 7.

subject, it was accounted an advantage by the crown. Not only was the fence about royalty supposed to be the greater, but the traitor forfeited his estates, and all such estates went to the king. In the twenty-fourth year of Edward III., the commons, stimulated probably by the lords, took up this subject with great earnestness, and persisted in their suit until a new statute was obtained. This law declared that treason should attach in future to seven offences only—especially to such as should be convicted, by their peers, or by a competent jury, of compassing or imagining the death of the king, the queen, or their eldest son; of levying war within the realm, or taking part with the king's enemies; of uttering counterfeit coin; of murdering certain great officers of state, or a judge in the discharge of his duty.*

Another significant change is due to the patriotism of the commons of England during this reign. It was provided that all pleadings in courts of law should in future be in English. This had long been the usage in some measure, but chiefly in the lower courts. From this time, those most interested in knowing how a case was presented, whether in civil or criminal causes, became fully cognizant of all that was said in relation to it. This law belongs to the thirty-fifth year of Edward III.; and when the next parliament assembled, the opening address was for the first time in English.†

In this change we may see clearly, that we have reached the point of revolution in English history in which the Anglo-Saxon element becomes again decidedly ascendant. This law, in fact, required that all schoolmasters should teach their scholars to construe in English, and not, as hitherto, in French.‡ The great landholders are still of Norman descent, and retain their familiarity, for the most part, with the French language. But the bulk of the people are English. The gentry are receiving daily more and

* *Rot. Parl.* ii. 239. † *Parl. Hist.* i. 127, 128. ‡ Ibid.

more of an infusion from the English; and in becoming powerful enough to determine the language of the country, not only in common life, but in schools, and courts, and parliaments, the men of English blood have become powerful enough to give the impress of their character to almost everything beside.

Liberties gained during this period.

From this time to the accession of the house of Tudor the constitutional history of England presents many new facts, but they are nearly all the development of old principles. The reign of Richard II., extending from 1377 to 1399, added considerably to the precedents of the past in favour of popular liberty. So, through all the changes which followed, many of them apparently the most unfavourable, the liberties acquired under Edward III. are retained, made more clear and certain, and in some respects enlarged. One precedent follows another in favour of the right of the commons in making their grants of supplies dependent on the redress of grievances; in insisting that such redress when promised shall be faithfully rendered; in securing that laws passed shall be recorded without corruption or mutilation; in declaring that no law shall be enacted, and no tax levied, without their consent; in asserting that to them it pertains to inspect and control the public expenditure, and to impeach the ministers of the crown for misconduct; and in claiming on behalf of their members, full liberty of speech, and the right, moreover, to originate all money bills. Nor are there wanting instances in which large views are announced touching the authority of parliament in relation to the possessions of the clergy, and the law of succession.* In these facts we find nearly all the popular principles since developed in our history; and these may all be traced, more or less clearly, to about the middle of the fourteenth cen-

* *Rot. Parl.* ii. 64 et seq. *Parl. Hist.* i. 34–157. Reeves's *History of English Law*, i. c. ix.–xiv. Hallam, *Middle Ages*, iii. 124 et seq.

tury. Practice did much to give permanence and authority to these principles, but the constitution for the preservation of which so memorable a struggle was sustained, partly under the Tudors, but especially under the Stuarts, was the constitution realized by the English House of Commons in the days of Edward III.

On the relation between law and people.

It is a great mistake to suppose that what was thus done by our kings and nobles, and by our knights and burgesses, sets forth the history merely of a legislature, or of a government, teaching us little concerning the political life of the people. These great facts do indeed lie on the surface of the past, but they tell us, with no little certainty and clearness, what was beneath. The debates and the law-makings of these parties may teach us little directly concerning the community at large, but they teach us much indirectly. In the ordinances and laws of these ancient commoners, we may see the embodied thoughts and passions of those in whose behalf they took their long and weary journeys, and sacrificed much precious time. The grievances enumerated by them, were the facts and experiences to be found, more or less, in all the farms and markets, in all the factories and seaports, and very largely at the firesides, of the then living people. Still, it is well to look below this surface, and to descend closely to what is beneath, as far as we may.

Condition of the people—the villein.

We have no reason to suppose that the Normans introduced any portion of the serf population found under their sway in England. The class in that condition after the Conquest, were such as had been in that condition before that event, or the descendants of such. Not a few of these were of British origin, and had clung to the soil under Saxon, Dane, and Norman. Under the early Norman kings the condition of this class was very low. According to Glanvil, even in the time of Henry II. the villein of the lowest class, could call nothing his own, neither his tenement, his

land, nor his moveables. His lord's claim, both upon him and his, was absolute; and his children were born into the same condition.* Still, he was not really a slave. He might be punished or imprisoned by his lord; but murder, mutilation, or rape, on the part of a superior towards his villein, exposed him to an indictment at the king's suit; and in relation to all other men the villein might claim the common protection of the law.†

Villeins by tenure.

But while some were villeins in the absolute sense above stated, others were described as villeins, because holding lands on condition of rendering certain personal services, in the manner of the villeins, in lieu of rent. The land was held in this case on what was accounted a villein tenure, but the man himself was not a villein.‡ This soccage tenure, as before mentioned, was in reality the tenure of free men.

Rise of villeins into freemen.

How the serf, or the villein proper, as he is sometimes called, should ever have become free may seem a mystery, seeing that whatever he might present as the price of his freedom must have been already the property of his owner. But this has been in part explained. The lord, it appears, did not always need the entire labour of his servile dependents, and often allowed them to hire themselves for their surplus time to their own advantage. Haughty nobles valued the gratitude and affection of their labourers, as secured by such treatment, much more than the gains that might have been realized by a more rapacious policy. By degrees, the amount of service required became fixed, and in some instances a copy of the agreement so entered into was furnished. In this manner the right of copyhold land, which answered very much to the 'bocland' held under the Saxon kings, had its origin; and in the time of Edward III. it had become law, that the lord could not seize the land of such

* Glanvil, lib. v. c. 5. † Littleton, § 181, 189, 190, 194.
‡ Ibid. 172. Bracton, lib. ii. c. 8; iv. c. 28. Hallam, iii. 257.

tenants so long as the holder paid his rent in the shape of the stipulated amount of service. Many of the lower grade of villeins became freemen through favour of the clergy to whom they happened to be subject; or through the influence of the clergy with their lords. But a greater number probably became independent, as before stated, by becoming fugitives, when to follow them from one part of the country to another was difficult, and when the law was known to be upon the whole in their favour, by accounting them free after a certain interval of unmolested residence elsewhere. In the reign of Richard II. the parliament complained that villeins fled from the country to the cities and boroughs, and that the citizens and burgesses gave them protection, in defiance of their lords when laying claim to them.*

Great number of free labourers.

We have already seen, that twenty years after the accession of Edward III. the handicraft and the husbandry of the country had come to be carried on, for much the greater part, by free labourers. The dearth and pestilence of 1348 had so diminished the labouring population, that very stringent laws were then issued to compel the artisan and the peasant to work for a certain rate of wages—laws which clearly imply that the labouring classes were then to a great extent free to sell their labour to the highest bidder. Some traces of villenage indeed continue in our history so late as the age of Elizabeth; but from the middle of the fourteenth century, the indications of its existence are faint, and seem to become more and more faint with each generation.

Effect of progress in skilled labour.

So, by degrees, a numerous free peasantry grew up, taking their place abreast with the freemen in towns. From this condition many made their way into the class next above them, consisting of substantial yeomen and traders; and from these classes taken toge-

* *Rot. Parl.* iii. 294–296. Hallam, iii. 258–269. Eden, *State of the Poor.*

ther, came those men of the bow and the battle-axe, who, under the guidance of our Norman chivalry, made the English name so world-famous in the days of our Edwards and Henrys. But the tide which shifted the strata beneath in this manner, did so under a pressure from beyond itself, and tended towards results only partially foreseen. These new conditions of the more occupied classes came from new ideas, and could hardly fail to be fruitful of other ideas not less new. Men had claimed these new conditions, in the main, because they had come to feel them to be in themselves fitting and right, and they had been ceded, in the main, for the same reason. In these facts we have signs of the political life of the people as it then existed. It is growing, and it will grow.

The English aristocracy not a privileged class.

It was to the honour of the nobility and gentry of England, that they could never claim any exemption from the burdens of the state, or any real suspension of the law in their favour, by virtue of their rank. In this respect, the ground on which they stood was really more noble than that occupied by the noblesse of France, and other Continental nations. To this honourable peculiarity we have in part to attribute the fact, that we hear so little of feud between the aristocracy and the commonalty in those times.* It gave to both classes a common interest in the law to which they were in common subject, and contributed probably fully as much as the limitations imposed on the power of the crown, to give permanence to our system of liberty. But if our nobles were less distinguished than the same order of men in most countries by political privileges, they were men of large

* A remarkable instance of this good feeling between the two houses we have in the parliament of the fifth year of Richard II. The commons requested the advice of the lords on a matter before them; but respect for the accustomed independence of the Lower House led their lordships to reply, that the ancient form of parliament had been for the commons to report their own opinion to the lords and the king, and not the contrary, and on this ground the request was not complied with.—*Rot. Parl.* iii. 100.

wealth, and shone in all the splendour naturally attendant on the man of large possessions. The contrast between this baronial magnificence and the poverty and villenage elsewhere, might be harmless so long as political thought lay dormant. But it was otherwise when such thought became active. The night—a long night—had passed, the waking time had come; and what the thoughts were which that awakening had brought with it, in the case of the industrious middle class, and of the labouring class below them, history has in part disclosed to us.

Growth of independence.

It was no secret to this growing middle class, that from their head and their hand, for the most part, came the wealth and splendour of the powerful class above them. They thus learnt to attemper the respect due to that class with a becoming recollection of the respect due to themselves. They knew they had duties, but they knew also that they had rights. In the presence of the proudest they were not often abashed. The distance between the burgess and the knight, the yeoman and the baron, might be great; but the ground which severed them from each other had long been greatly diminishing, and was felt to be by no means so considerable as that which they occupied in common. The popular poetry, and the private history, of the time, place these men of clear head and strong hand before us, as men of free utterance and of erect bearing, yet as serious withal, whenever the matter in hand was of a nature to demand seriousness.

Such were the yeomen and burghers who sent knights and burgesses to parliament. It was under such guidance, in great part, that these English commoners learnt to insist in that assembly, that the Englishman should not be taxed without his consent, and to insist on much beside of that nature, of which mention has been made.

Loose condition of the suffrage.

But it is observable, that much as the House of Commons was valued by this class, the question of the suffrage did not hold the place with them that has been assigned to it in later times. County members

were deputed to their service by the loose suffrage of the gathering in the county court. As we have seen, it is not until the reign of Henry VI. that the right of voting was limited by the forty-shilling freehold.* Borough members are said to be sent by the community; but there is reason to believe that the choice was often left to the borough corporation.† The cause of this course of affairs seems to have been, that there was very little difference of opinion among commoners in those days concerning what was needing to be done. Let the counties and the boroughs send their men, and, in general, the feeling would appear to have been, that there was no room to fear the competency of the house to the work expected from it. The first signs of jealousy in relation to the suffrage were called forth by the conduct of certain sheriffs, who learnt to make a bad use of the power entrusted to them. Defective and corrupt returns were frequently made by them, sometimes to gratify their own prejudice or caprice, and sometimes in obedience to an unconstitutional influence exerted by the crown.‡

The purveying grievance.

The high comparative freedom of the commonalty in those times may be inferred from the fact, that next to their complaints against illegal taxation, their great grievance related to the custom of purveyance. When the king travelled, his attendants often amounted to several hundreds, and his purveyors lodged the company, and seized on vehicles, horses, and provisions at pleasure. The law, indeed, required that for all this

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* *Statutes*, 8th Hen. VI. c. 7.

† See pp. 495, 496. Some of the boroughs, as is well known, prayed to be exempt from the privilege of sending members on the score of expense. It is worthy of remark that during part of the reign of Edward III. and the next four reigns, the boroughs of Lancashire are uniformly returned by the sheriff as too poor to send members.—4 Prynne, 317.

‡ In the fifth year of Richard II. a law was passed intended to ensure a more regular and faithful discharge of the sheriff's duty in this respect. But there is reason to think that the poorer and more distant boroughs were never more than partially represented even when they received the writ.

there should be reasonable compensation, but that compensation was often difficult to obtain. The payment was rarely adequate, often long delayed, and sometimes never made at all. To protect themselves against the consequences of these occasional visits of royalty, the commons obtained a law in the reign of Edward III. which said, that the right of purveyance should not extend beyond the king, the queen, and the heir-apparent; that even these should provide their own horses and vehicles; that the local authorities should see to the lodgment of the king's attendants, and should decide on all questions in regard to charge for accommodation and provision; that small sums should be paid immediately; that the credit in no case should extend beyond four months; and that the servants of the king infringing this law, as the manner of some had been, should be accounted felons, and be dealt with as such. By this enactment the grievance was greatly diminished, though it did not cease to be felt as such during many generations. The irritations produced by this custom were no doubt a greater mischief than the losses which it occasioned; but the sufferings of a people which left this to be their great grievance could not have been very weighty.*

Growth of popular discontent.

It is probable that the suffering of the lowest class —the town artisan and the peasant labourer—was not greater in those days than will be found in the same classes in much later times. But the contrast in that day between the condition of the high and the low was much stronger, while the ignorance of the latter class often disqualified them for receiving with

* See the references to a number of statutes on this subject in the time of Edward III.—*Parl. Hist.* i. 149–156.

In the twentieth year of this reign, 'some complaints having been made to the king and parliament against the purveyors for the king's household, who under colour of their commission had taken up all manner of provisions without ever paying for them, the king caused a strict inquiry to be made, and some of the most notorious offenders were hanged, and others condemned to pay great fines.'—Ibid. iii.

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sobriety the new ideas regarding the common origin of the race, and the common relation of all men to right, and to the Allrighteous, which were then breaking upon them so forcibly from parliaments and pulpits. The maxims of equality announced by Magna Charta, and which had been iterated with so much constancy and emphasis in political and parliamentary struggles since; and the sacredness which had been imparted to those maxims by the sanction which religion itself had conferred on them, had evidently caused them to take strong possession of the mind of the class feeling itself to be the lowest, and accounting itself the most down-trodden. If it be well, said the Chartist of that day, that men should be equal in the sight of God and the law, why should their equality end there? Why should the labour of the poor be so cheap, seeing the rich can well afford to pay a better price for it? Why should there be a trace of villenage left among us, seeing the powerful have no need of villenage? Yea, why should not the time come for a redistribution of wealth, seeing it has long since drifted away from the many, and become enormous in the hands of a few? Had not the old Hebrews their year of jubilee, when the slave ceased to be a slave, and the unequal were unequal no longer? If we are all of one stock, why are we not one brotherhood? If we are all of the same family, why are we not in the same condition? If equality was the rule in the first and the best times, why should it not be the rule now? Such are some of the questions which were seething in the rude mass of mind in this country in the middle of the fourteenth century, and which prompted the great outbreak associated in the history of that century with the name of Walter the Tyler. The well-known distich on the lips of the commonalty of that time gives us at once this pliase of thinking :—

> When Adam delved and Eve span,
> Who was then the gentleman?

All our histories relate, that soon after the accession

Insurrection under Wat Tyler.

of Richard II. the embarrassments of the government led to the imposition of a poll-tax—consisting of a certain sum to be paid by every adult person, of either sex, according to condition; that this tax was in great part farmed by certain collectors; that the discontent excited by this measure was great, especially among the lower classes; that the men of Essex, led by a baker of Fobbing, were the first to oppose the collectors by force; that the attempts made to suppress this disorder only multiplied insurgents, and caused the destruction of a grand jury who were finding indictments against some of the leaders; that the rudeness of a collector towards the daughter of one Walter, a 'tyler' at Dartford, provoked the father to strike the ruffian a blow with his hammer, of which he instantly expired; that Wat suddenly found himself at the head of a multitude of people possessed with the idea of compelling the government to abandon this obnoxious tax, and to rule the poor commons more justly and humanely; that this multitude took possession of London, acquitted themselves for a while peaceably and orderly, but soon grew unmanageable, and committed great atrocities; that Walworth the mayor, in a burst of passion, during a conference in Smithfield, gave Wat his death-blow; and that after that, his followers were dispersed, and many of them hanged.

That this outbreak seemed to be a failure—worse than a failure—does not detract from its significance. It is a mistake to suppose that great effects ever come from small causes. Causes are always as great as their effects, and greater. The last apparent cause may seem to be trivial, but it has come in the train of predisposing causes which were adequate to the result. It is a spark only that seems to do the mischief; but the spark would have been harmless if the combustible material had not been there. The explosion in this case came, not from the baker at Fobbing, nor from the 'tyler' in Dartford, but from the discon-

Significance of the outbreak.

tents which were everywhere ready to burst into a flame. Such feeling was the feeling existing in nearly every state of Europe. France and Flanders had been recently exposed to excesses of the kind which now broke upon England. Governments had everywhere become more costly; and, through corruption or inexperience, were apparently most improvident; while the intelligence diffused among the people by a more prosperous industry, had disqualified them for a ready acquiescence in such a course of things. The result was a strong antagonism in many quarters between the governing and the governed. Let the last remains of villenage come to an end; let the rent for land in future be a fixed money payment, not a personal service;' and let trade in markets and fairs be free from vexatious tolls and imposts—these were the first demands of the insurgents under Wat Tyler. If we may credit their enemies, their subsequent projects were in many respects as foolish as their deeds were reprehensible; but the belief that public affairs were badly managed, and that they might and ought to be otherwise managed, was not the less strong because the power to articulate that conviction clearly and wisely was wanting. From that conviction came the insurrection; and to that conviction, more intelligently directed in other men, and in other circumstances, this land owes the changes which have made it the home of a free people for so many centuries. The grievances complained of by Wat Tyler and his followers were real, the great misfortune of these people —a misfortune by no means uncommon—was, that they did not know how to seek the best ends by the right means.*

* Sir Hugh Segrave, the lord treasurer, addressing parliament at its opening, on Nov. 3rd, 1381, said, 'among other things, that in the late rebellion the king had been forced to grant the insurgents letters patent, under the great seal, enfranchising to a considerable extent those who were only bond tenants and villeins of the realm; for which the king, knowing them to be against law, desires them to seek a remedy, and to

provide for the confirmation or the revocation thereof.' Richard professed himself willing to do as he had promised, with the consent of parliament. The lords and commons resolve unanimously: 'That all grants of liberties and manumission to the said villeins and bond-tenants, obtained by force, are in disinherison of them the lords and commons, and to the destruction of the realm, and therefore null and void.' This House of Commons, however, complained of many abuses of the government as having led to the late commotions, 'and presented many petitions on grievances, and for a general grace and pardon, stating that, considering the rancour of the people, they neither dare nor will grant any tallage.' At length a subsidy was obtained, but not without the 'grace and pardon.'—*Parl. and Councils of Eng.* 144, 145.

Some of my readers will be interested in knowing that Simon de Montfort, who gave us our first House of Commons, was really a man of the sort that Laud and Strafford would have branded as a Puritan; and that archbishop Langton, who did so much towards procuring the Great Charter for Englishmen, was the author of that fine church hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*. Both these facts have become known through publications which have only recently appeared. So religion and liberty have been helpers of each other from times long past in our history.—See *Monumenta Franciscana*, Introd. xciv.; and *Spicilegium Solesmense*, Domino J. B. Pitra. *British Quarterly Review*, vol. xiv. 568.

CHAPTER V.

RELIGIOUS LIFE IN ENGLAND, FROM THE DEATH OF KING JOHN TO THE ACCESSION OF HENRY IV.

Culminating point in the history of the papal power.

IN general, ambition must be wise to secure its objects—wiser still to perpetuate the acquisitions it has made. Where success has been great, it is easy to believe it may be greater. Hence the excess which brings reaction. Innocent III. was one of the most powerful and sagacious of the pontiffs. But his course towards England brought the papal authority to its culminating point in our history. The vassalage which he imposed on king John, and the manner in which he opposed himself to the feeling of the nation in condemning the Great Charter, and in excommunicating its authors, suggested lessons which were not to be forgotten. In his person, the see of Rome had affected to be the arbiter of all rights, whether as set forth by sovereign or subject. Sovereign and subject came to feel that this monstrous priest-rule was an error and a mischief, and that as such it should be resisted. But resistance on this ground, which nearly all men were ready to approve, prepared the way for resistance on other grounds, where the justice of the proceeding was not so obvious. The idea of resistance, even in that quarter, became familiar to the mind of the highest and the lowest. It came to be a matter beyond doubt that the infallibility of the pope must have its limits; and so the question, the dangerous question, came up—what are those limits? In the struggle of parties, those on whose side the thunders of the Vatican were wielded, were disposed to assign to them a great authority; while those to whom they were opposed, were found to be capable of

treating them very lightly. By degrees, all parties learn to regard these fulminations as instruments of rule possessing little strength except as derived from the ignorance and superstition of the age.

The love of Money takes the place of the love of Power.

The successors of Innocent III. often appealed to his maxims, but the time to act upon them for purposes of ambition had passed. Still, they had their uses. They served to give an appearance of moderation and plausibility to the interferences of the papacy in matters deemed properly ecclesiastical:—and it became a tacit maxim with the court of Rome, to be content with less power than formerly, if the power retained should only prove to be sufficient to ensure a satisfactory revenue. So a habit of low rapacity came into the place of the higher passion. The ecclesiastical history of England from this time to the commencement of the Reformation, consists—in so far as the relation of this country to Rome is concerned—in a constant struggle on the part of the popes to enrich themselves, as far as possible, from the revenues of the English church; and on the part of the crown, of the lay patrons, and of the clergy generally, to protect themselves against this war of spoliation.

The case of the papacy *versus* the national churches.

The grounds on which these pretensions rested have been stated, viz.—that the pope is the head of the universal church; that as such the dignity of himself and of his court must be sustained; that the means to this end must come from the revenues of the churches owning his authority; that it pertains to him to take cognisance of the revenue of the order of men specially subject to him, and to judge as to the best method of applying it to its proper uses; and that the contributions required to be paid into his treasury, were not greater than were necessary to make suitable provision for himself, and for the persons whose services were indispensable to the administration of the affairs entrusted to him.*

* See pp. 388–391.

The reply made was—that no one questioned the supreme authority vested in the pontiff in respect to matters ecclesiastical and spiritual; that no good Christian could wish to see the spiritual head of Christendom deficient in regard to the means of upholding his proper dignity, and rewarding reasonably the persons occupied in affairs falling properly beneath his oversight; but, from some cause, it was only too manifest, that the papal influence was always present where the question of money might be raised; that, in fact, the popes were surrounded by men whose avarice was insatiable; and that to enrich these persons, and others depending on them, the pontiffs had shown themselves prepared to lay their hands on the revenues of the church upon a scale which threatened to transfer the greater part of the wealth of the country into the hands of foreigners—men who often failed to render the slightest service in return for the emoluments so bestowed upon them.

Peter's pence.

The expedients by which the popes contrived to acquire the virtual command of so much wealth were various. The contribution which bore the name of 'Peter's pence' was the least considerable of their gains from this country. This payment was as old as the Anglo-Saxon times. It was designed at first, to constitute a fund for the relief of English pilgrims. It is said to have consisted at that time of a tax of one penny on every house of a certain value. But it soon came to be a payment in a fixed sum—and it remained the same sum for centuries, uninfluenced by the increase of houses or of wealth. The annual payment was about 200*l.* The popes flattered themselves that it would be possible to return to the old custom of rating the householders, and to realize a much larger amount by that means. But the attempt was resisted, and the resistance prevailed.

King John's tribute money.

One demand of the Roman see, particularly odious to the people, was more honoured than it should have been for more than a century in our history. We

refer to the annual payment of a thousand marks, promised for himself and his successors by king John, when that monarch consented to receive his kingdom as a fief from the hands of Innocent III. It is true, this payment was by no means regularly made. It was dispensed with when the favour of his holiness might be dispensed with, and it was observed when the observance was felt from special circumstances to be expedient. In 1366 Edward III. had been a defaulter in this respect for more than thirty years. In that year Urban V. demanded the payment of these arrears. The king laid the menacing letter of the pope before his parliament, and the lords, the commons, and the clergy, were unanimous in repudiating the papal claim. From that time we hear no more of the 'census,' as it was called; and with the census fell the more harmless payment of Peter's pence.*

But the two great sources of wealth to the papal see still remained untouched—these consisted in the custom of 'provisors,' and in the claim on the 'first-fruits' of vacant benefices.

The custom of provisors.

The nominal appointment to a vacant bishopric rested with the monks or chapters in each cathedral. But, for a while, the approval of the archbishop was necessary to give validity to every election of a bishop. By degrees, both chapters and metropolitans were virtually superseded, and the real choice in such cases came to be a sort of alternate compact between the crown and the papacy. The king was sometimes greatly annoyed on finding that the pope took exception to the man of his choice; but in general our monarchs appear to have been less offended by this sort of interference than their subjects. It was felt, that any attempt to ignore the pretension of the Roman see in such cases, backed, as it would be sure to be, by the chapters, must lead to endless discussion; and it came at length to be pretty well understood,

* Collier's *Eccles. Hist.* i. 560.

that concession on one side to-day, might be expected to ensure concession on the other side to-morrow. The pontiffs insisted that it pertained to them to make 'provision'—hence the technical term 'provisors'—for all vacant bishoprics. But the persons so provided, were in some cases commended by the king, and approved by the pope; in others, they were chosen by the pope, and accepted by the king; and in all cases the new bishop was required to confess that his temporalities were received from the crown, and not from the papacy. It will be seen, however, that the field of patronage thus open to the see of Rome was enormous. In the distribution of episcopal wealth and power, the authority of the pope was placed fully abreast with that of crowned heads, from one end of Christendom to the other. The division of the spoil was not the same in all places, or at all times; but the partnership was a reality, though of a sort which left each partner to encroach on the profits of the other by almost any expedient that might be deemed favourable to that end.

But if the pope might provide in this manner for the highest cures in the church—why not for the subordinate? The question was natural; it soon arose; and, in fact, the popular complaint at this time had reference much less to what was done in relation to bishoprics, than to the manner in which even the lower offices and emoluments of the church were made to pass into the hands of foreigners. In this department the evil roused the jealousy and indignation of the entire class of lay patrons, and the people at large saw its effects brought home to their own doors. The crown was usually powerful enough to compete with the papacy in relation to bishoprics, but the antagonism between lay patrons and the pontiffs, was generally by no means an antagonism between equals.

The first-fruits.

Nor was it enough that the custom of 'provisors' enabled these parties to reward their servants and dependents, by raising them to places of authority and

opulence. By means of another custom, the first year's income from the larger benefices, in the case of persons so promoted, passed to the papal treasury. This is the branch of revenue which bore the name of 'first-fruits.' Gregory the Great had denounced all such payments as simony. But the voluntary offering made by an ecclesiastic entering upon a benefice in his time, had come to be a regular and definite tax in the thirteenth century; and the payment in such cases, instead of being made to the bishop of the diocese, was often made to the pope. By degrees, the popes learnt to assert a claim on the first-fruits of *all* vacant livings. But this was a pretension which it was felt could not be prudently urged except under the plea of special need, and, even then, only within certain limits, in respect to time and territory. Clement V. made a demand of this kind on the English church for two years; John XXII. for three years. Licence was also often granted to particular bishops to exact the first-fruits, for some special reasons, from all livings that should become vacant in their province during certain years ensuing.

Usage of commendams—general corruptness.

But these were all crooked expedients. The government based upon them was not natural. Corruption could not exist in such forms without diffusing itself further, and in fact it was found everywhere.*

* Walter Reynolds, who was called to the see of Canterbury in the early part of the fourteenth century, returned from Rome empowered by the pope to exercise all the rights pertaining to the prelates within the province of Canterbury, in their stead, for three years, and to select one preferment for himself out of every cathedral church. He was also authorized to remit all offences committed within the last hundred days, if duly confessed; to restore one hundred disorderly persons to communion; and to absolve two hundred men from the sin of having laid violent hands on the persons of the clergy. He was further declared competent, in the name of the pope, to qualify a hundred youths of uncanonical age for holding benefices with the cure of souls.—Wilkins, ii. 483, 484. Walter is said to have been rich, and to have paid a high price for the ecclesiastical wares with which he was thus laden, and which were of course sold to the highest bidder. What happened in his case, happened, we must suppose, not unfrequently.

Men were introduced to vacant livings by what was called 'commendam'—that is, were *commended* as fit persons to hold the cure until the person designed to occupy it permanently should be appointed. But, under various pretences, these commendam appointments were often made to continue for years, sometimes for a whole lifetime. The election of an abbot furnished the same occasion for papal interference. Appeals from authorities in this country to the authority of Rome, arose from grounds innumerable, and in no quarter, if the opinion common to the age may be credited, was bribery so all-pervading and dominant as in the papal court. In Rome, according to the current language of the time, everything might be obtained by money, nothing without it.*

How ecclesiastical diplomacy was managed.

On occasions, the popes proceeded so far as to demand a rated contribution from the entire moveables of the kingdom. On the goods of the clergy such a claim was often made. An incident from the time of Henry III. will serve to illustrate this point, and some others, comprehended in the politico-ecclesiastical machinery of this period. In 1228, Stephen, archbishop of Canterbury, died. The monks of Canterbury obtained permission from the king to choose a successor. Their choice fell on one of their own order, named Walter de Hemisham. But the king took exception to this decision. The bishops, suffragans to Canterbury, also demurred, on the ground that *their* opinion had not been taken. Walter appealed from the king, and from the bishops, to the pontiff. The king sent his envoys to sustain his suit in the papal court. The pope had his reasons for affecting at first to favour the suit of Walter. The English ambassadors felt the alarm it was intended they should feel. They assured the pope and his ministers, that they were not insensible to the financial difficulties which the war in Germany had entailed on his holiness; but

* Wendover, A.D. 1226. M. Paris, A.D. 1236, 1247, 1253.

that, were this suit only terminated to the satisfaction of their royal master, they could venture to promise that the contribution of a tenth should be made to the papal exchequer from all the moveables of England and Ireland. The pontiff now declared the election of Walter void. But he at the same time professed himself greatly displeased with the monks at Canterbury for the course they had taken, so much so, that it was imperative upon him to punish them, and this he stated he should do by superseding their function, and appointing the next archbishop himself. This filled the English ambassadors with new alarm. The promotion of some tool of the papacy to the see of Canterbury, might lead to grave mischiefs. It was now urged that the pontiff should pause in these proceedings until further instructions should be obtained from England. In these instructions, the king urged that Richard, chancellor of the diocese of Lincoln, might be raised to the primacy—adding, that, should the pope approve this choice, the promised tenth should be paid. The pope did approve; the papal legate came to England for the tenth; the case was laid before the English parliament; the laity refused to be bound by the king's promise; the clergy, after some days' hesitation, submitted to the impost; and the rigour with which it was exacted called forth loud expressions of indignation. Ralph, earl of Chester, warned the collectors not to appear on his domain, and in such terms as made his warning effectual.*

Protest of the bishop of Lincoln.

This narrative may be taken as a fair sample of the network of rival pretension and intrigue which constituted the history of the English church in its relation to the papacy during the three centuries which preceded the Reformation. Innocent IV. wrote to Robert Grostete, the celebrated bishop of Lincoln, requiring him to induct a child, nephew to the pontiff, into a

* Wendover, A.D. 1228, 1229. M. Paris, 348–362. Wykes, 41.

vacant living. In his reply, the bishop was so bold as to denounce the mandate as more fit to have come from Antichrist, or from Lucifer himself, than from the successor of the apostles. The bishop knew, however, while he condemned this proceeding in such terms, that such things were common; and in his latest recorded words—words uttered in the near prospect of death—he described the court of Rome as sunk in avarice, as capable of all sorts of simony and rapine, as the slave of luxury and libertinism, and as employed in corrupting the sovereigns of Europe down to its own level, in place of raising them to the purity of the Gospel.*

Collectors of the papal revenue—hated by the people.

The papal officers engaged in conducting the financial affairs of the court of Rome in England in the thirteenth century are said to have been more numerous, and better organized, than the agents of the king's government; and the amount annually transmitted to Rome from all sources, is said to have been greater than that raised for the crown. So odious, accordingly, were these officers in the eyes of the people generally, as to be liable to every sort of insult, to open assault, and, in some cases, to the loss of life. Complaints were made again and again to the court in whose cause these penalties were incurred, and in the remonstrances which followed, the English were described as showing themselves, by such conduct, to be more impious than the heathen persecutors of the faithful in the early ages of the church.†

Measures of parliament relating to them.

But these officers, and their proceedings, were scarcely more obnoxious to the people than to the parliament. In the last parliament of Edward I. severe measures were taken to check all encroachment of this description. An Italian priest named Testa, who was at the head of the pope's revenue department in this country, was made to appear before the two houses of parliament; was publicly censured; was forbidden

* Matthew Paris, A.D. 1253. † Ibid.

to proceed further with his exactions; and was even commanded to return moneys in his possession, for the king's use. An act was at the same time passed, which became known as the first act against 'provisors.' It forbad, under severe penalties, the bringing of any papal 'provision,' or any document whatever, from the papal court, into this kingdom, the publication of which might be in any way inconsistent with the rights of the English crown, or of those subject to it.* Under Edward II. this law was not a dead letter. The pope deputed two prelates to attempt a reconciliation between that prince and his queen Isabella. The two bishops had sent dispatches before them, stating that they should come without letters or instruments of any kind that could be used to the prejudice of the king or of his people. But the constable of Dover was instructed to meet the bishops on their landing, and to remind them in the most distinct and formal manner, of the penalties they would incur should they prove to be the bearers, or should they hereafter attempt to execute, any order, to the injury of the king, his land, or his subjects.†

Resistance to papal encroachment under Edward III.

In the thirty-fifth year of Edward III. complaint on this subject was renewed, and new measures were taken. In the parliament of 1343, 'the commons of 'England made great complaint of the provisions 'and reservations coming from the court of Rome; 'whereby the pope took up beforehand the future 'vacancies of ecclesiastical dignities for aliens, and 'such as had nothing to do within this realm. They 'demonstrated to the king the manifold inconve-'niences ensuing thereby—as the decay of hospitality, 'the transporting of the treasure of the realm to the 'king's mortal enemies, the discovering of the secrets 'of the kingdom, and the utter discouraging, dis-'abling, and impoverishing of scholars, natives of the 'land. Among other instances they showed how the

* *Rot. Parl.* 219 et seq. † Rymer, iv. 206.

'pope had secretly granted to two new cardinals 'sundry livings within the realm of England, and 'particularly to the cardinal of Perigort above 10,000 'marks in yearly collections.' The commoners pray that a remedy may be found for mischiefs to which they could not, and would not, any longer submit; and if it should be said that the abuse did not admit of correction, they pray the king's help 'to expel the 'papal power out of the realm.'

The king commended the consideration of the grievance to the two houses. By the parliament, the provisions of the statute of Edward I. were reiterated, and made more stringent, the substance of the declaration of the lords and commons being, that no rescript from the court of Rome should be in itself of the slightest legal value in the realm of England; and that all persons convicted of introducing, receiving, or attempting to act on such instruments, should be subject to the penalty of forfeiture, and be otherwise dealt with according to the king's pleasure. On this occasion, the lords and the commons wrote a joint letter to his holiness, stating their case, and indicating, in very decisive terms, their expectations at his hands. 'Forasmuch,' say they, 'most holy father, as you 'cannot well attain to the knowledge of divers errors 'and abuses which have crept in among us, and may 'not be able to understand the customs and circum-'stances of countries remote from you, except as you 'may be informed by others, we, who have a full 'intelligence of all errors and abuses within this 'realm, have thought fit to make known the same to 'your holiness—and especially of the divers reserva-'tions, provisions, and collations which by your apos-'tolic predecessors of the church of Rome, and by you 'also in your time, most holy father, have been 'granted, and now more illegally than heretofore, to 'divers persons, men of other nations, some of them 'our professed enemies, having little or no knowledge 'of our language, or of the customs of those whom

'they should teach and govern, to the peril of many 'souls, the great neglect of the service of God, the 'decay of alms, hospitality, and devotion, and the 'ruin of churches, causing charity to wax cold, the 'good and honest natives of the country to fail of 'promotion, the cure of souls to be disregarded, the 'pious zeal of the people to be depressed, the poor 'scholars of the land to be unrewarded, and the trea-'sure of this realm to be exported in a manner con-'trary to the intention of those from whose pious 'beneficence that treasure is obtained. All which 'errors, abuses, and scandals, most holy father, we 'neither can nor ought any longer to suffer or endure. 'Wherefore we do most humbly require that the said 'scandals, abuses, and errors may of your great pru-'dence be thoroughly considered, and that such reser-'vations, provisions, and collations may be utterly 'repealed; that such practices be henceforth unknown 'among us; that so the said benefices, edifices, offices, 'and rights, may in future be supplied, occupied, and 'governed by our countrymen. May it further please 'your holiness to signify to us by your letters, without 'delay, what your pleasure is touching this lawful 'request and demand; that we may diligently do 'our part towards the correction of the enormities 'above specified.'*

The effect of this plain-spoken and significant epistle does not appear to have been all that its authors thought they had a right to expect. The parliament of the next year, taking the matter more thoroughly into its own hands, made the penalty of violating their late statute to be abjuration of the realm, outlawry, or perpetual imprisonment. Seven years later, the two houses pushed their legislation on this subject still further; and in 1353, declared the man liable to the forfeiture of all his lands and goods, and to imprisonment at the king's will, who should presume to

* *Rot. Parl.* ii. 144, 155. Barnes's Edward III.

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carry any cause to a foreign court which pertained of right to the king's court—the foreign court specially intended in this case being the court of Rome. This vexed affair continued to occupy the attention of parliament at intervals to the close of the reign of Edward III. The issue towards the close of that period was a sort of compromise between the king and Gregory IX., which was far from being satisfactory to either lords or commons.*

Effect of the residence of the popes at Avignon—

Many causes contributed to this perpetual embroilment, and to the bitterness by which it was characterized on the part of our forefathers. Among the most conspicuous of these causes was the forced residence of the popes in France, followed, as it was, by the papal schism. In the early part of the fourteenth century, Philip the Fair, of France, as the result of some passionate disagreements with the see of Rome, removed the papal court to Avignon. By this policy, Philip succeeded in assigning the office itself to Frenchmen. This exile of the popes from Rome lasted seventy years, and, in the language of the Italians, was the Babylonish captivity of the papacy. Clement V.; John XXII.; Benedict XII.; Clement VI.; Innocent VII.; Urban V.; and Gregory IX.—all succeeded each other at Avignon, and all were Frenchmen. The cardinals, moreover, as might be expected, were also mostly of that nation. Thus the papacy was virtually in the hands of France, while France had come to be regarded as the great enemy of England. In the eyes of Englishmen at that time, the court at Avignon and the court at Paris were one; while the creatures and adherents of the papacy in this country, from their being to a large extent Frenchmen, or Italians who had become resident in France, were naturally regarded as doing the work of spies, and as enriching the chief enemy of the king

* Rymer, vii. 83 et seq. *Rot. Parl.* ii. 337 et seq. *Statutes of the Realm.*

and kingdom by all their acts of spoliation. The Avignon popes, moreover, were not men to abate these natural causes of disaffection by their personal influence. Mosheim speaks of them as men who 'having 'no other end in view than the mere acquisition of 'riches, excited a general hatred against the Roman 'see, and thereby greatly weakened the papal empire, 'which had been visibly on the decline since the time 'of Boniface.'

And of the schism in the papacy.

When the captivity ended, the schism began. In 1378, on the death of Gregory XI. the cardinals assembled to choose a successor. But the populace of Rome, aware that three-fourths of the cardinals were still Frenchmen, and indignant that the tiara had been so long awarded to ecclesiastics of that nation, assembled in great numbers about the place of meeting, and by threats induced the cardinals to choose an Italian. The object of their choice was Bartholomew de Pregnano, bishop of Bari, who assumed the title of Urban VI. But some of the leading cardinals retired from Rome soon afterwards, and at Fondi, a city in the Neapolitan territory, they elected the cardinal of Geneva in the place of the archbishop of Bari, and this rival pope assumed the name of Clement VII. The plea urged in support of this proceeding was, that the former election had been the result of intimidation. France, and her allies—including Spain, Sicily, and Cyprus—gave their adhesion to Clement; England and the rest of Europe, proclaimed themselves Urbanists. As Europe was then divided in its judgment concerning these rival pontiffs, so the question between them has remained an undecided question to this day. During the next half century the church had two, sometimes three, heads at the same time, each busy in his plottings, and in thundering all sorts of anathemas against the other.

The history of the Avignon popes showed that the supposed representative of Deity on earth might become a prisoner in the hands of one of the crowned heads

of Christendom, in place of ruling as a sovereign independently of all such rulers, and above them all. The schism was a still deeper shock to the opinion and feeling of the age. With men of sense, it might well seem easier to account priestly infallibility a dream, than to regard it as a quality that might be competed for by two or three claimants at a time. The presence of the papal court in the once quiet city of Avignon, converted it into the haunt and home of every abomination; and the more northern nations could judge of the virtues which followed in the track of the chief pastor of the church, without crossing the Alps to acquire that kind of knowledge. Furthermore, as this change of home brought with it both weakness and poverty, it furnished new pleas on the side of greater artifice with a view to greater exactions. The thunders which the rival popes hurled at each other, were the natural emblems of the wars and the rumours of wars with which their contentions had filled all Europe. So both parties became known by their fruits, fruits which bespoke the presence of the wolf, it was said, rather than of the shepherd.

Retrospect —laws in revolutions.

Such was the political machinery of the ecclesiastical system of Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and such are some of the more potent influences then in action upon it—to what issue did it tend? In attempting to answer this question it behoves us to bear in mind that depraved men rarely cease to be depraved men. Such instances occur, but they are exceptional. But if a self-reformed man is a phenomenon rarely seen, still less may we hope to see a community or a corporation become self-purified. In the fourteenth century all things seem to point to reform or ruin. But there was room to fear that reform would be long resisted, even at the hazard of the ruin. When do the crafty learn to be ingenuous? When do the avaricious learn to eschew the lust of gain? What will not an individual do, still more what will not corporate bodies do, rather than submit to such self-crucifixion? It is no

marvel that Wycliffe, and Huss, and Jerome should give signs of the coming change. But as little marvellous is it, to those who look beneath the surface, that the course of this change should have been so unequal and so slow, and that to the last it should have been so limited. It is a law of Providence, that change in bodies should be slow when the body is great. Nor is it less a law that what the great heart of humanity has been long in constructing, it must be long in taking to pieces, and in casting utterly away. Revolutions, like creation, have their laws—laws which determine their time, and speed, and mode, and result. Good men would fain be fast workers, but Providence is ever schooling them into two great lessons—to *work* and to *wait*. It is not always remembered, that were the quicker production of good possible, the quicker production of evil would be possible; that to extrude from humanity the tendencies which give permanence to the bad, would be to leave little ground for permanence to the contrary of the bad. Mind has its laws of opposite forces, in common with matter; and the power of habit, so far as our experience extends, cannot exist for good, without existing also for the not-good. Did men change their religion easily, we might expect them to change it often—much too often.

Distinction between the hierarchy and the people.

In this chapter we have seen, so far, something of the religious complexion of the times as presented in the upper stratum of society, where the chief actors are popes and princes, ambitious churchmen, and the more wealthy among the laity. Of course, in connexion with this strife about the distribution of church offices and church revenues, something much more religious existed even in that level of society. But the laymen and churchmen, the women and the men, in such connexions, who possessed a truly religious spirit, come but rarely in sight, and are but little known to history. Beneath this upper stratum, however, there was a middle, and a lower, and what is to be found there?

To find the lowest grade in the population of the

Condition of tenant and labourer in the counties in the thirteenth century.

thirteenth century we must look to quarters in the largest towns and cities. In the country, the baron knew his tenants and villeins, and could not dispense with their services. The relations between these parties were comparatively understood and settled. Each needed service from the other, and the service needed was not to be expected from any other quarter. While the ties which linked the feudal lord to his dependents were of this nature, those which linked the religious houses to their numerous tenantry and labourers were still more intimate. Servile, accordingly, in many respects, as the condition of the cultivators of the soil may have been, their position was such on the whole as to secure them an oversight from their superiors, which was favourable, in many ways, to their comfort, intelligence, and independence. In this manner, in agricultural districts, the stability of things with the upper classes extended itself to the lower. Times might be better or worse, but the lord and his servant shared them together.

City populations in the thirteenth century.

It was otherwise, however, in towns. In such places, the crowd was the greatest, and the isolation was the greatest. Every man there was expected to be more self-reliant than in the country, and he became so, but not always to his advantage. Men who knew how to use this liberty, becoming industrious, self-governed, virtuous, rose above the operative class elsewhere in intelligence, and in familiarity with home enjoyments. Men who abused this liberty, becoming idle and vicious, suffered the penalty of their ways, with none to pity or reclaim them. It thus came to pass, that the town populations of those times consisted of two classes, the well-conducted and well-to-do; and the ill-conducted, who were huddled together in filth, disease, and misery. In regard to religion, the first class was much more sceptical on such matters than is now generally supposed; while the second soon sank down very far in ignorance, superstition, and heathenism. The Crusades had done much to

enlarge and liberalize the ideas of men. The effect of those enterprises had not been so much to settle as to disturb the faith of Christendom. It was seen that infidels could be virtuous and brave, no less than Christians. Everywhere a tendency toward discussion had grown up. New demands were thus made on the clergy. If the sceptical were to be satisfied, that would require strong practical intelligence; and if the degraded and miserable were to be reclaimed and elevated, that would require a large measure of benevolence and self-denial. It is evident that the clergy of the age were not equal to the work which had thus grown upon their hands. They were found wanting, both in the kind of knowledge, and in the spirit of self-sacrifice, demanded by the times. This was nowhere more felt than by some of the best men of their own order, such as Grostete, the pious and able bishop of Lincoln.

But in the history of religion, there is a law of action and reaction which becomes visible in its season. When the Christian priesthood became rich and worldly, monachism arose as its fitting rebuke; and now that monachism, in its turn, has become corrupt, the mendicant orders make their appearance, as a great practical protest against the inaptitude and selfishness of both monk and priest. This event dates from the first half of the thirteenth century.*

Origin of the Franciscans.

St. Francis, in founding the order which has since borne his name, hoped to retain what was good in the existing ministries of the church, and discarded many things which in his eyes were only so much hindrance and evil. He saw not a little to censure in the existing ecclesiastical system. But his object was not so much to reform the church, as to supplement its

* Butler's *Lives*; '*St. Francis of Assisium.*' *Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography*, by Sir James Stephen; 'St. Francis.' *Monumenta Franciscana*, edited by G. S. Brewer, M.A. The admirable Introduction to the last-mentioned publication deserves the attention of the student.

agencies, and indirectly to purify and elevate them. Popes and cardinals, priests and monks, were all left to their respective vocations; but there was a work that should be done which none of them were doing, and which St. Francis commissioned his disciples to do.

The Franciscans become city missionaries.

There was a great want of city missionaries in those days, and the early Franciscans were men separated to that service. In common with the priests and monks of their time, they were not to be married men. In common with the monks they were to live together in fraternity. But, unlike the monks, they were not to limit their religious duty to praying for souls in the chapel of a monastery, but were to go in search of them by preaching, and by all humane offices, in the lowest parts of the city, or amidst the wretched hovels which housed them outside the city gates, or beneath the city walls. In common with the parochial clergy, they were preachers, having the cure of souls; but, in distinction from the clergy, they made preaching to be their great work, found their parish everywhere, and especially where ignorance and vice, filth and suffering, were known to be most accumulated and least disturbed. The wealth of the church had been her great snare, had rendered her inefficient—helpless, in regard to the great wants of the age, and the Franciscan, in consequence, was to know nothing of religious endowments, nothing of a settled revenue for the support of his ministry. His dress, his diet, his home, all were to be such as to bespeak him a poor man, and to proclaim him as the poor man's minister. He was to be the willing servant of the community, especially of the most needy and forgotten portions of it, and he was to depend on the free offerings of the community from day to day for his maintenance. To the honour of Romanism, within its pale, poverty in the minister of religion has never been a bar to the reverence due to his office. Hence, in originating even such an institute, brother Francis could exact, that

men, to become his disciples, should not only be men of fervent piety, but men of fair capacity, and competently learned. In the Franciscans of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, what has become known in our time under the name of the voluntary system, may be said to have been put upon its trial.

Settlement of the Franciscans in England.

When the first delegation of friars landed at Dover in 1224, the authorities took them for vagrants, or something worse. But one of their number satisfied the men in office of their mistake, by making very light of being hanged, and offered the rope from his waist to be used in the ceremony, if no better should be available. Such is the temperament generally given to men who have some mission in life. With the help of the scanty fare, and the sour beer, obtained at religious houses on their way, the first colony of Minorites reach London, and construct tenements for themselves on the Cornhill, near the New-gate. The buildings are of the poorest description imaginable, dried grass being stuffed into the crevices to keep out the wind and rain.

Their benevolence.

In that age, plague and leprosy were the terrible maladies, especially among the crowded populations of towns. But leprosy had come into Europe from the Holy Land with the return of the Crusaders. Much had been recorded concerning it in the sacred Scriptures. It was the figure of what all men are by nature. Even the Incarnate One was regarded as taking his place, in the language of prophecy, with this class of sufferers. Hence, while some looked on the leper with special horror, seeing in that malady more than in any other a direct infliction for sin, the more general feeling was one of special compassion, and almost of religious awe. Persons so afflicted, however, were as much shut off from society as they would have been among the ancient Hebrews. With the Franciscans, these children of calamity, and the hospitals set apart for them, were special objects of attention. In general, the friar knew something of the healing art,

and exercised his skill in that way while administering the consolations of religion. He had thus a double claim on the gratitude of the objects of his compassion. Of course, the men who were thus to be found in the most avoided haunts of human wretchedness, were to be found in all places where the necessitous were the most likely to be forgotten or neglected.

Their preaching.

In their preaching, the friars eschewed the learned and logical style then so common. In their view, the clergy had become disqualified for their work by their learning, hardly less than by their wealth. They were themselves poor men preaching to the poor, and laymen preaching to the laity. Their language was studiously simple. Their illustrations were studiously popular. They found material for discourse in the well-known legend, in dramatic dialogue, in every-day life, and in their own thought and experience. Meditation and feeling, more than books, made them what they were as preachers. Men and women to whom sermons had long been beyond all things unintelligible and dull, now hung upon the lips of the preacher, and would travel far to enjoy that privilege.

Their success.

Great was the success of the new institute. In little more than thirty years the Minorites of England could boast of being more than twelve hundred in number, and of having fixed centres of operation for their missionary work in nearly fifty English towns. As we read the accounts of their progress, of the effects produced by their preaching, and of the number of conversions, we may almost imagine that we are perusing the journal of the pious founder of Methodism. Religious and humane persons supplied them with funds. Their good works made them many friends. But the monk had rarely a good word for them, and the parochial clergy generally shared in the same feeling of jealousy.

The Franciscans become learned.

But it was not to be expected that the energy which could achieve such things would remain content with that indifference to learning which St. Francis had

enjoined. The condition of mind with which the Franciscans had to deal in the intelligent and sceptical portions of the lower classes in towns, rendered it necessary that the 'competently learned' qualification of their founder should be liberally interpreted. The attacks made upon them, moreover, by their rivals, the monks and the clergy, contributed to render some change in this respect necessary. Their great patron, Grostete, was fully alive to this necessity, and consented to deliver lectures to them in Oxford. Many of the more learned and gifted men of their own order did the same in different parts of the kingdom. So, by degrees, the disciples of St. Francis, while adhering to the general maxims of his institute, became scientific and learned, and, in the end, more scientific and more learned than the older orders in the church. Men of scientific taste among them could boast of their Friar Bacon, and men of scholastic ambition could boast of their Bonaventura and Duns Scotus.

Good and evil from this change.

But evil came from this source with the good. The logic of Aristotle was opposed to mysticism. It was an assertion of the authority of 'common sense.' It was favourable to exactness in expression, and to the intelligible in arrangement. In the hands of the Franciscans it contributed largely, directly or indirectly, willingly or unwillingly, to freedom of thought. Everywhere, a tendency to oppose reason to mere authority, had become manifest. The Franciscan schoolmen declared themselves willing to meet the thought of the age on this ground; and undertook to show that revelation itself, in place of being a setting up of authority against reason, was in fact an appeal to reason. It was inevitable that the result of taking such ground would be of a mixed nature. The existing church, resting as it did almost wholly on authority, could not fail to suffer. The application of this logic, with its endless distinctions, to controversies of every possible description, threw such an air of contradiction and unsettledness over everything, that

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the men who had acquired a high reputation as preachers to the poor, became objects of popular contempt, as wasting existence in little else than the confounding of each other with their mutual subtleties. When learning among the Franciscan leaders had so far spoiled them for carrying out the strict intentions of their founder, others had begun to show signs of deterioration from less reputable causes. That love of ease and indulgence, which St. Francis saw, or thought he saw, in the distance, as the great danger of his order, proved to be not only there, but to be quite as perilous as his devout fear had led him to imagine. Many of his disciples fell under those influences. The consequence was a rapid decline in popular estimation; and in their attempts to retain the power which was thus passing away from them, the second generation of Franciscans descended so often to the use of low artifice and vulgar superstition, that the order which had been hailed by men like Grostete as a divine gift to the age, are in the end denounced by such men as Chaucer and Wycliffe as a disgrace to the church and the nation.

Rapid deterioration of the Franciscans.

In less than thirty years from the death of St. Francis, we find that Bonaventura, the greatest man among the governors of his Order, felt constrained to address the provincial ministers in the following terms: 'The indolence of our brethren is laying open 'the path to every vice. They are immersed in carnal 'repose. They roam up and down everywhere, bur-'thening every place to which they come. So im-'portunate are their demands, and such their rapacity, 'that it has become no less terrible to fall in with 'them than with so many robbers. So sumptuous is 'the structure of their magnificent buildings as to 'bring us all into discredit. So frequently are they 'involved in those culpable intricacies which our rule 'prohibits, that suspicion, scandal, and reproach have 'been excited against us.'*

* *Biographical Essays*, by Sir James Stephen, i. 149.

While these signs of change did so much to diminish the popularity of the Franciscans, their rigid orthodoxy, and the zeal with which they upheld every pretension of the papacy, tended to the same result. Innocent III., who gave the papal sanction to the mission of St. Francis, was a man of extraordinary intelligence and energy. Fraternities and sects of every description had grown up of late over Europe, all more or less hostile to the priesthood, and to the religious teaching of the age. By means of the disciples of St. Francis, the far-sighted pontiff hoped to give a check to these tendencies, by opposing fraternity to fraternity, and one class of popular preachers to another. It was only as shielded by his holiness, that the Franciscans could hope to keep their ground in the face of the frequent hostility of the bishops, of the older religious orders, and of the more influential of the laity. Interest, accordingly, to say nothing of gratitude, disposed them to become conspicuous as champions of the papal power, and of its most extravagant dogmas. The natural effect followed. The reforming spirit of the times came to be everywhere against them. The antagonism which their institute had seemed to present to the enormous wealth and worldliness of the hierarchy was pronounced a fraud. If to be distinguished from other ecclesiastical schemes, it was only as being more hypocritical, by keeping up the appearance of a peculiar self-denial which was such only in appearance. Such, however, was the shrewd adaptation of the institute to its purpose, that, notwithstanding all these abuses, it has survived in considerable vigour in Catholic countries to this day. The great preachers in Italy are still the 'Preaching Friars.'

Chaucer's pictures of society.

The pages of Chaucer disclose much concerning the moral and religious state of the community among whom the English Franciscans had to prosecute their labours in his day. In the *Canterbury Tales*, we have a group of characters which are

mostly from the middle class, with frequent glances at the general state of manners about the middle of the fourteenth century. Both the ecclesiastical persons, and the lay persons, belong to the same grade. They all come before us, moreover, as led out in cavalcade by the religious spirit of the times. Their place of destination is the tomb of Thomas à Becket. Their object is an act of religious worship. Some of these tales, however, are of a strange material, especially as coming from the lips of persons travelling for such a purpose. Some of the stories, indeed, show that the legends of ancient piety and martyrdom were still read by religious persons with deep interest, and were made familiar to the ear of society generally. Faith, it would appear, in the tender offices and intercessions of the Virgin, was often strong, and also in the received doctrines of the church; and by that faith the pure and afflicted spirit was not unfrequently sustained under much wrong and suffering. It seems clear, that pictures of saintly purity, patience, and heroism could be devoutly admired in those days. But these tales enable us to look into the homes of the middle and lower classes generally, both in town and country. They are pictures of habits and manners; and the strong worldliness and sensuousness which were softened by a comparative refinement in the upper ranks, are there seen to become so gross as to cause the common talk of society to be most licentious and corrupting. The pilgrims on their way to Canterbury, male and female, listen to narratives so obscene and lascivious, as to be better suited to the worst haunts of vice than to modest and devout ears. The clerk and the monk, the prioress and the nun, are all among the listeners to these impure stories. Such, it seems, was society, *religious* society, at that time.

The same tales furnish pictures of ecclesiastical characters which are in a high degree instructive. The portrait of the 'Pardoner' embodies the craft, the

covetousness, and the mendacity which were attributed to the 'Begging Friars' by Armachanus, Wycliffe, and others. The fact that religious functionaries of such a character were found everywhere, shows what the ecclesiastical system could tolerate, and accounts in part for the disaffection with which it came to be regarded. Similar thoughts are suggested by the sketch of the 'Sumpnoure,' an official who exacts all sorts of clerical dues in a manner the most merciless and iniquitous. The monks introduced do little honour to the canons of the church touching celibacy; and the 'Clerke of Oxenforde' shows how the parochial clergyman might be given to his fopperies and amours, and still retain his cure of souls.

Effect of the existing system on three classes.

The effect of the errors and corruptions of the ecclesiastical system was different on different classes of persons. Men not disposed to concern themselves with anything of a religious nature, were strengthened in every tendency towards irreligion, and the number of the positively irreligious, even in those superstitious times, was much greater than is commonly imagined. Others were thus influenced only so far as to be prompted to lift up their voice in parliament, or elsewhere, against the abuses of the system, continuing, after all, in the main, good Catholics. But there was another class whose defection rested, not merely on moral, or national, but on religious grounds, and who embraced most of the opinions which became prevalent in this country as Protestant doctrine in the sixteenth century.

Wycliffe.

The name most prominently associated with the progress of these opinions is that of John de Wycliffe. This extraordinary man is supposed to have been born in 1324, in a village which bears his name, on the banks of the Tees in Yorkshire. He appears to have entered Oxford in 1340, and was mainly resident in that university until within about three years of his death, which took place in 1384.

He first distinguished himself in a controversy with

His dispute with the friars.

the Mendicant orders, which is generally dated from about the year 1360, and when he must have been not more than thirty-six years of age. Other writers had marked the rapidity with which these orders had fallen away from the institute of their founder. Their preaching had degenerated so as to be little adapted to the religious or the moral improvement of their hearers. They managed, moreover, to become very rich, in the face of a vow which doomed them to poverty; and, as will be supposed, the wealth thus disingenuously obtained, became the cause of a still deeper deterioration. But many of them had become learned, distinguished themselves as professors, and were so skilled in intrigue, especially in making proselytes from among the sons of wealthy families, that before the middle of the fourteenth century, parents had ceased so generally to send their children to Oxford, that the students of the University were reduced to about a fifth of their former number. There were four orders of friars, of which the Dominicans and Franciscans, especially the latter, were the best known in England.

The ground taken by Wycliffe in his controversy with these fraternities was distinguished from that taken by his precursors, as consisting, not so much in complaints of alleged abuses, as in exception taken to the institute of the religious orders considered in itself. Wycliffe upheld the authority of the parochial clergy. He accounted the mendicant preachers intruders upon ground already occupied. He denounced the conduct of St. Francis and others in originating such orders, as an attempt to do something for the church which her Divine Founder had not been wise enough, or powerful enough, to do—an assumption which he described as nothing short of blasphemy. Thus, in the first step of his course as a controversialist, we find the germ of the Protestant doctrine concerning the sufficiency of Scripture; and that principle once seized, was never relinquished. The

mission of the Saviour was to found his church, and to institute that 'order' for her benefit best adapted to her need; and to attempt to supplement and amend what He had thus completed, was to reflect on Him as a defective instructor, who had not attained to *our* standard of wisdom and goodness.

His preferments.

In the year 1360, Wycliffe appears to have obtained his first preferment, which consisted of the living of Fillingham, in the diocese of Lincoln. That living was in the gift of the fellows of Balliol College, Oxford; and in that same year Wycliffe became master of Balliol. Four years later he ceased, from causes unknown to us, to be master of Balliol, and became known as warden of Canterbury Hall, founded by Simon de Islep, who was then archbishop of Canterbury.* Canterbury Hall was designed at first for a certain number of clerical or secular scholars; together with a lesser number and a warden, who should be monks, and be chosen from the monastery of Christchurch, Canterbury. But the rivalries between the parochial clergy and the religious orders in those days were ceaseless and bitter. The experiment in this case was not successful. Feud grew up between the two parties; and Islep resolved to alter the foundation of the establishment by restricting its advantages to the secular clergy only, to the exclusion of either monks or friars. It was on this new basis that Wycliffe, by the choice of Islep, became warden. The monks were excluded, and with them Woodhall the warden. Woodhall and his brother monks protested against this proceeding, and petitioned Peter

* Attempts have been recently made to show that the warden of Canterbury Hall was not Wycliffe the Reformer, but one Whyteclyve of Mayfield, who is supposed to have been in favour with archbishop Islep. But this new idea is beset with all sorts of difficulty—the old one is, we feel assured, the true one.—See the subject discussed in *John de Wycliffe, a Monograph*, by the Author, c. iii. And in an article intitled *Wycliffe, his Biographers and Critics*, in No. LVI. of the *British Quarterly Review*.

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Langham, who became archbishop of Canterbury in the place of Islep, deceased, to annul what had been done, and to restore them to their former position. Their plea was, that Islep had been unduly influenced in making the late change, and had taken this course in his last sickness, when incompetent to act. Langham, who had himself been a monk, and abbot of Westminster, was inclined to perpetuate the original connexion between Canterbury Hall and the monastery in Canterbury, and accordingly restored Woodhall and his brethren. It was now Wycliffe's turn to protest. But for him and his expelled clerks there was no remedy, it seems, except by causing their suit to be taken to the papal court. This step was taken. The litigation thus commenced extended over nearly four years—from 1367 to 1370; and through the joint influence of Canterbury and gold, a verdict was at length obtained in favour of the monks.

His opinion on the king John tribute.

It was while this cause was pending, that pope Urban demanded payment of the tribute promised by king John. We have seen how the English parliament met that demand. An anonymous monk published an argument in favour of the claim which had been thus repudiated, and challenged Wycliffe by name to reply to it. Wycliffe, who by this time had become chaplain to the king, answered the challenge in a paper which gives the substance of the debate upon the question in the House of Lords. In this paper Wycliffe declares the papal claim to be baseless, on the ground both of reason and Scripture. He was well aware of the probable effect of such a course on his pending suit; but he nevertheless gives utterance in this publication to some of those opinions which, as further developed and diffused, were to expose him ere long to so much trouble.

Becomes professor.

Wycliffe appears to have taken his degree as Doctor in Divinity in 1372, which authorized him, according to the usage of those times, to deliver lectures as a professor of theology in the university. He availed

himself promptly and sedulously of this privilege. Two years later, we find him one of an embassy appointed to negotiate with the papal delegates at Bruges, on those proceedings of the papal court of which such frequent and loud complaint had been made in the English parliament. The part taken by Wycliffe in this embassy, which lasted nearly two years, and the effect of his more public labours in Oxford, rendered him increasingly obnoxious to the papal court, and to the more servile of its partisans in this country.

Proceedings against him.

In 1377, accordingly, letters are sent by the pope, both to Oxford and to Canterbury, insisting that inquiry should be forthwith made concerning the doctrines said to be promulgated by Wycliffe. He is in consequence summoned to appear before the English convocation in St. Paul's. He makes his appearance there, but it is with John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, on the one side, and earl Percy, marshal of England, on the other. Courtney, bishop of London, was the presiding churchman; and the advance of the noblemen and their attendants towards the space where the clergy were seated, appears to have caused some noise and disturbance. An old Chronicle has described the scene which ensued.

Bishop Courtney.—Lord Percy, if I had known what masteries you would have kept in the church, I would have stopped you from coming hither.

Duke of Lancaster.—He shall keep such masteries, though you say nay.

Lord Percy.—Wycliffe, sit down, for you have many things to answer to, and you need to repose yourself on a soft seat.

Bishop Courtney.—It is unreasonable that one cited before his ordinary should sit down during his answer. He must and shall stand.

Duke of Lancaster.—Lord Percy's motion for Wycliffe is but reasonable. And as for you, my lord bishop, who are grown so proud and arrogant, I will

bring down the pride, not of you alone, but of all the prelacy in England.

Bishop Courtney.—Do your worst, sir.

Duke of Lancaster.—Thou bearest thyself so brag upon thy parents,* which shall not be able to keep thee: they shall have enough to do to help themselves.

Bishop Courtney.—My confidence is not in my parents, nor in any man else, but only in God, in whom I trust, by whose assistance I will be bold to speak the truth.

Duke of Lancaster.—Rather than I will take these words at his hands, I will pluck the bishop by the hair out of the church.†

This last expression was dropped in an undertone to earl Percy. It was heard, however, by the people near, who seem to have been more disposed to side with the bishop than with the duke. Much excitement and confusion followed. The meeting was dissolved, and the Reformer withdrew under the protection of his powerful friends.

Synod at Lambeth.

Some nine months later, it was noised abroad that Wycliffe was about to appear before a synod of the clergy in Lambeth. On this occasion he had not the presence of great men to sustain him. But the people were with him, and in their demonstrations in his favour became loud and disorderly. Encouraged by the presence of some wealthy citizens, the populace forced their way into the chapel, to be witnesses of the proceedings. The clergy were alarmed. Still more so when Sir Lewis Clifford made his appearance, and in the name of the queen-mother forbade their proceeding to any conclusions injurious to Wycliffe.

Wycliffe's reply to charges against him.

Something, however, was done. Wycliffe had received a paper containing a statement of the false

* His father was the powerful Hugh Courtney, earl of Devonshire, a family which boasted of its descent from Charlemagne.

† *Ex Hist. Monachi Albani*, in Foxe, *Acts and Mon.* ii. 797, 800.

doctrines attributed to him. To this paper the Reformer had prepared a written answer, which was placed in the hands of the commissioners. Wycliffe retired amidst the acclamations of the people, but the delegates sat in judgment on his paper, and the sentiments expressed in it were all declared to be either erroneous or heretical. The grand points in this document were twofold—those which placed the ultimate authority in relation to the persons and property of churchmen in the hands of the laity; and those which stripped the censures pronounced so freely by ecclesiastics in those times of all validity, except as they should happen to be in accordance with the will of God. It pertained to the laity, as an ultimate authority, to correct a delinquent clergy; and the supposed power of the priest to make the spiritual condition of any man at all other than the man himself had already made it, was declared to be a mere priestly invention. This was to deprive the clergy of the weapons which had given them the sort of dominion in things temporal and spiritual of which they were possessed. It was to take the souls of the people out of their hands.

Opposes the doctrine of transubstantiation.

During the next four years Wycliffe's labours in Oxford were abundant, both in lecturing and in authorship. Through every year during the last twenty years of his life, his opinions appear to have become more and more adverse to those which the ruling clergy were concerned to uphold. The climax of his offending at the close of the four years mentioned was, his lecturing openly against the doctrine of transubstantiation. Proceeding thus far, he was silenced by the chancellor of the university, and his power to be useful as heretofore in Oxford, was thus brought to a close. This happened in 1381.

Retires to Lutterworth.

The remaining three years of his life he resided on his cure as rector of Lutterworth, where he preached constantly, revised his theological lectures for publication, carried on his translation of the entire Bible

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into English, and published an almost incredible number of tracts and treatises, all bearing on his one object —the reformation of the religion of the times.

Summary of his doctrine.

According to the doctrine of Wycliffe, the crown was supreme in authority, over all persons and possessions in this realm of England—the persons of churchmen being amenable to the civil courts, in common with the laity; and the property of churchmen being subject to the will of the king, as expressed through the law of the land, in common with all other property. Nor was it enough that he should thus preclude the papal court from all meddling with secular affairs in this English land. According to his ultimate doctrine, the pretence of the pope to exercise even spiritual jurisdiction over the church of England, as being himself the head of all churches, should be repudiated as an insolent and mischievous usurpation. The whole framework of the existing hierarchy he describes as a device of clerical ambition; the first step in its ascending scale, the distinction between bishop and presbyter, being an innovation on the polity of the early church, in which the clergy were all upon an equality.

Concerning the Sacraments, he retained the ordinance of Baptism, but without receiving the doctrine of the church in respect to it as being necessary in all cases to salvation. In like manner he retained the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, but without the doctrine of transubstantiation or of consubstantiation. Confirmation was, in his view, a custom originated by churchmen to gratify their pride; and penance was a usage which had come from the same source, and which had been so managed as to be always much prized by covetous and ambitious priests. To the same effect does he express himself concerning the alleged sacraments of Holy Orders and Extreme Unction. None of these services, he maintains, necessarily convey any beneficial influence, and all are more or less disfigured by superstition, and

fraught with delusion. But Wycliffe was a believer to the last in the existence of an intermediate state, and in the efficacy of prayer on the part of the living for souls in that state. But masses for the dead he describes as a piece of priestly machinery, carefully adjusted with a view to gain. The prayer of a layman, he insisted, would be quite as efficacious as that of a priest, while all prayer must be fruitless, except as coming from faith and charity. In regard to church censures, he taught that men are never the better nor the worse for them, inasmuch as the spiritual condition of the worshipper, as a responsible creature, and that alone, determined his destiny. He saw the wealth of the church as St. Francis had seen it, as having brought all kind of evil upon Christendom. But he was not content simply to oppose an order of 'poor priests' to an order of rich ones. His maxim was, that it became every Christian people to support a Christian priesthood, but that suitable 'livelihood and clothing' were sufficient. In short, there was a lofty idealism in his doctrine concerning human authority altogether, which was liable to be misunderstood, and brought him into some trouble. His general notion on this subject, though derived mainly from Augustine, has a feudal cast about it. In his view, the Divine Being is Chief Lord in relation to all earthly authorities and possessions. All are received from him on conditions, and those conditions failing, the gifts are forfeited—but forfeited in respect to God, not in respect to man. The priest who fell into mortal sin forfeited his office and possessions in respect to man; but Wycliffe's writings abundantly show, that in the case of the layman, when found to be thus delinquent, the consequences were regarded as purely spiritual, and as having relation to God only, not as temporal, and to be dealt with as such by society.*

* *John de Wycliffe*, c. xii. *Wycliffe, his Biographers and Critics*, 37. The Rev. W. W. Shirley's account of Wycliffe, recently published (*Fasciculi Zizaniorum*), is full of error.

Freedom of opinion in the fourteenth century.

The fact that a man who published such tenets should have lived at large so long, and have died in his bed, suggests that the force of opinion on the side of free thought and free utterance must have been great in those days. It is true, bishop Courtney could venture to bring the terrors of persecution to bear on men of less mark; but it appears to have been felt to the last, that to adopt severe measures towards Wycliffe, might be to evince more zeal than prudence. His opinions embraced nearly every dogma since professed by Protestants, and some which were so far advanced that few Protestants even now are found prepared to adopt them. He multiplied tracts and treatises in English, and of a size to admit of wide circulation, to a marvellous extent. He encouraged a class of men, known by the name of 'poor priests,' to travel from county to county, and to preach in churchyards, fairs, markets, or in any other place where people were wont to congregate, and might be disposed to listen to them. Nor were these itinerant orators without their friends. Knights and gentlemen might often be seen standing near them, prepared to act as their defenders.* These agencies came, as we have seen, in the wake of much that served to make the people willing to hearken to such instructors. Such was the effect produced on the popular mind, that, according to the historians of the time, you might be sure that every second man you met would be a disciple of the new doctrine. On the whole, it is hardly too much to say, that England was more ripe for a Protestant reformation in the last days of Edward III. than in the best days of Henry VIII. But the Continent was not in an equal degree prepared for such a change.

The policy of Richard II. towards religion, was like his policy in everything, right and wrong by turns, but always feeble. Under his sanction the persecution

* Knighton, 2660, 2661.

of the disciples of Wycliffe began. But while thus making enemies of all classes of reformers, he failed to make friends of the clergy, or of the papal court. He did many things which were meant to be acceptable in those quarters, but he had neither the power nor the disposition to do all that was expected from him. The persecution of the Lollards—for by that name the religious reformers now began to be distinguished, extended over the whole reign of Richard II. It was particularly felt in Herefordshire, Leicester, Nottingham, and in Northampton. But the feeling of disaffection was not subdued, it was rather diffused, and became more outspoken. The memorable 'Remonstrance' of this party, published in 1395, as an address to the people and parliament of England, furnished sufficient evidence on this point.

The Wycliffite remonstrance.

The authors of this paper say, that the church of England, since she began to dote on temporalities, after the example of Rome her stepmother, has declined in faith, hope, and charity, and become infected with pride and all deadly sin; that priestly ordination, as commonly performed, is a human invention, and delusive, the gift of the Holy Ghost being restricted to spiritual men, and never conferred because a bishop affects to confer it; that the professed celibacy of the clergy leads to every kind of sensuous wickedness, and that for this reason, all monasteries and nunneries should be dissolved; that the doctrine of transubstantiation, as commonly taught, is inseparable from idolatry, and would be at once discarded if the language of the Evangelical doctor (Wycliffe), in his *Trialogus*, were wisely considered; that the custom of exorcising, and the manner of consecrating places and things, savour more of necromancy than of the Gospel; that the clergy sin against religion and the state by assuming worldly offices; that prayer for the dead, if offered at all, should have respect to the departed generally, and not to particular persons, all hireling services of this nature, as wanting in charity, being assuredly

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valueless; that auricular confession and absolution, as ordinarily practised, lead to impurity, and are of no worth, except as serving to uphold the dominion of priests; that pilgrimages to do honour to images and relics are idolatrous, a device of the clergy to keep the people in ignorance, and to augment their own wealth and power; and that all aggressive wars, whether on the plea of religion or conquest, are contrary to the letter and spirit of the religion of Christ.*

These were bold utterances to be found in a document presented to the commons of England. But so presented it was, and its contents were largely discussed, as including much deserving grave consideration. Richard censured Sir Lewis Clifford, Sir John Latimer, Sir Richard Sturry, Sir John Montague, and others, for the favour shown by them to the complaints of these malcontents. Pope Boniface wrote expressing his amazement and grief that men should be found in the English parliament capable of sympathizing in any degree with such opinions. But the reforming members of the Lower House found the rebuke of the king and the pope more than counterbalanced by the applause of the people. Papers were posted by night on the doors of St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, in which ridicule and scorn were heaped upon the errors and corruptions attributed to the religious orders and to the clergy generally.†

Reasoning of the clergy at this time.

It may seem strange, that the clergy of the fourteenth century should find themselves confronted with these signs of disaffection, and never appear to suspect that there was some truth and justice in the feeling thus expressed, nor seem to have once thought that it might possibly be wise to endeavour to neutralize and remove it by amendment. They might reasonably take exception to many of these opinions, and to much in the temper of the men by whom they were broached. The logic of Wycliffe himself might be often at fault, and

* *Remonstrance, &c.*, edited by Rev. G. Forshall. † Foxe, an. 1395.

his temper not less so, but was there nothing in the man or in his doings entitled to a better estimation? In the place of any measure of considerateness and discrimination of this sort, the one idea of the clergy seems to have been, that the discontented were such always and wholly without reason, and that the only fitting mode to deal with them was to coerce them, and, when possible, to crush them without mercy.

Retrospect.

Such, then, were the conditions of religious life in England from the age of Magna Charta to the accession of the house of Lancaster. The relations between the English church and the papacy, led to endless disputes between the crown and the ruling classes on the one side,—and the popes, with their dependents and adherents, on the other. With religion proper these strifes had little to do. The struggle was between two great systems of patronage. The object on either side, was to secure the largest possible share in the distribution of the offices and emoluments of an opulent hierarchy. Beneath the region in which this conflict was carried on were the people, who were not greatly edified by the example thus constantly presented to them on the part of the powers above them. But as politicians were thus taught to use sharp speech in describing the conduct of the accredited guides of the church, the example became infectious, and something of its effect is seen in that free utterance of the popular mind on religious matters which characterized the reign of Edward III. During that half century, the civil power was expected to be the shield of those who ventured upon such criticisms; and fear of the clergy was limited by the fact, that whatever might be their disposition to persecute, it was no secret that their power in that direction was not great. In the latter half of the fourteenth century, accordingly, we find the interval in our annals which is marked by the highest culture, and the largest measure of freedom, known in our history, until we come to the times of the Reformation. Men-

tally, ethically, and religiously, the reign of Edward III. is the brightest portion of our Middle Age life. It gave us all the great principles and precedents of the English Constitution, and with these our Chaucer and our Wycliffe. Men felt, in those days, that they might be devout without fear, cherish freedom of thought, and indulge in a large freedom of speech. On the accession of Richard II., the spirit of the country was more buoyant and free than on the accession of Henry VIII., and the relative number of truly devout men in it would seem to have been much greater in the former time than in the latter.

BOOK V.

LANCASTER AND YORK.

CHAPTER I.

THE REACTION.

THE arbitrary conduct of Richard II., coupled as it was with so many signs of weakness and wickedness, account sufficiently for the deposition which awaited him. The earl of March, son of Lionel, duke of Clarence, was the next heir to the throne. But Henry of Lancaster, who was also cousin to Richard, had suffered much from his hands, and was placed by circumstances at the head of the powerful party in arms against him. By the barons, the clergy, and the people, Lancaster was regarded as the most eligible person to fill the vacant throne; and, by an act of the English parliament, Henry, duke of Lancaster, was accepted as king of England. Accession of Henry IV.

These events form an epoch of change. The causes of this change, however, were not so much national as personal. We find them in the character of the king, and in the factions of his court. They came from the nation only in so far as the nation had become possessed with a spirit of freedom, and had been too long familiar with the forms of comparatively good government, to allow of its being content under a king whose passions so often set law at defiance, and tended only to bad government.

But if the causes of this change are found in persons more than in the nation, the interests of the nation were deeply affected by it. Arundel, arch- His policy.

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bishop of Canterbury, visited Henry in his exile, and induced him to engage in the enterprise which placed him on the throne. This circumstance seemed to promise that there would be a fast friendship between the house of Lancaster and the church. But, on the other hand, John of Gaunt, the father of the new king, had been the great patron of Wycliffe, and the king himself had been disposed at one time to favour the new doctrines. It soon became manifest, however, that the crown and the mitre were about to combine in an effort to crush those tendencies on the side of a change in religion which had grown to be so formidable. Henry knew, probably, that, since the disorders under Wat Tyler, many of the great men had learnt to look with suspicion on the proceedings of the reformers, and he appears to have persuaded himself, that Lollardism in the middle and lower classes might be kept safely in check, if only the church and the barons should prove faithful to him.

But his nobles were not all found faithful. The rumours of plotting against him, in more than one quarter, soon came to his ears. Men whom his clemency had spared conspired to destroy him. The Scots, the Welsh, and the Percys, compelled him to take the field against them. In all these signs of unsettledness we see the effect of the irregularities and violence to which Henry had been indebted for his elevation. He was a king, but the Percys had made him such, and the jealousies from this source, and others of a similar complexion elsewhere, made his experience of sovereignty no enviable matter.

Statute for burning heretics.

For a while, however, even the House of Commons were prepared to abet some of the worst features of the king's policy. In the second year of Henry IV. the statute for the burning of heretics was passed. This instrument commences with stating that complaints were often and everywhere made about persons who, without licence from the proper authority, gave themselves to preaching; who retained possession of here-

tical books, convened unlawful assemblies, and diffused in many ways the most pestilent opinions. The provisions made against these disorders are—that no man shall preach in future who is not duly authorized; that, within the next forty days, all books containing doctrines at variance with the determinations of the church, shall be delivered to the ecclesiastical officers; that all persons suspected of offending in these respects, or of being present at unlawful meetings, or of favouring such meetings, or the errors taught in them, shall be committed to the bishop's prison, to be there dealt with at his pleasure, during a space not exceeding three months; and if such persons fail to clear themselves of the charges brought against them, or shall not abjure their errors if convicted, or shall relapse into error after such abjuration, then the officers of the place, both civil and clerical, shall confer together, 'and sentence being duly 'pronounced, the magistrate shall take into hand the 'persons so offending, and any of them, and *cause them* '*to be burned* in the sight of all the people, to the in-'tent that this kind of punishment may be a terror to 'others, that the like wicked doctrine and heretical 'opinions, and the authors or favourers of them, may 'not be any longer maintained within the realm.'* In this law we see how the king could use a subservient parliament, and how the clergy could use a selfish and blood-guilty king. To this statute another was added, which declared ecclesiastics exempt from the tribunal of the magistrate in criminal cases, a demand of the clergy which had been so often resisted by our sovereigns.

Two men perished under the statute for the burning of heretics during the reign of Henry IV.—William

* *Stat.* 2 Henry IV. c. 15. Coke, *Instit.* p. iii. c. 5. Strange to say, Sir Edward's exposition of the reason of this statute, if admitted, would seem fully to justify it. We proscribe the leper, and heresy, he writes, is the deadliest form of leprosy.—Burnet's *Reformation*, bk. i. 44, 45. Fuller's *Church Hist.* ii. 385–390.

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Sawtre and Badby burnt.

Sawtre, a clergyman, and John Badby, a mechanic. They had both embraced the doctrine of Wycliffe on the eucharist, and on some other points. Sawtre appears to have been somewhat wanting in consistency and firmness. Badby was a true martyr. Both perished at the stake.* But the king did not rise in popular estimation by this policy. Placards were fixed on church doors, and elsewhere, denouncing him as a perjured tyrant and usurper. The blood of his predecessor, and of other noble persons, was said to be upon him. Discontented barons, and persecuted Wycliffites, were prepared to join in league against him He was soon obliged to unsheath the sword in defence of his crown; and in future he does not cease to find assailants of his policy within the walls of parliament.

Reforming spirit of the Commons.

In the fourth year of his reign the commons petitioned that every benefice should have an incumbent always resident; that no Frenchman who had taken the vows of a monk should remain in the kingdom; that all priories in the hands of foreigners should be seized; that the clergy and the religious orders should be required to do hospitality from their revenues; and that no youth under the age of twenty-one should be received into any order of mendicants. These were demands which Wycliffe would have applauded.

When the next parliament assembled, an attempt was made by the chancellor to repress this freedom, by stating, in behalf of the king, that it was the royal pleasure that the church should be maintained, in all her immunities, as in the times of his predecessors, every kingdom being like the human body, possessing a right side, which consists of the church, and a left, which consists of the temporal powers, the commonalty being as the remaining members. The reply of the commons to this arrogant nonsense, was in the shape of a petition praying the king to remove his

* Wilkins, iii. 254 et seq. Foxe, i. 675, 687. Fuller's *Church Hist.* ii. 391, 392.

confessor, and two other persons of his household. Henry now saw that his attempt to over-awe the reformers by high talk had not been successful. He not only assented to the petition, but added that he was prepared to displace any other persons whose presence near him may have been displeasing to his people. Nothing, he assured his faithful commons, was nearer his heart, than to reign as a good king; and he proceeded so far as to invite the house to lay freely before him whatever measures should appear to them as likely to conduce to the honour of God, or the welfare of the state.*

It is probable that by this language the king hoped to check, rather than to stimulate, the reforming spirit of the commons. But if such was his policy, it was not successful. The commons prayed that the persons selected by the king, in the settling of his household, should be persons of good reputation, and that notification should be given them of what was done in that respect. In the next session, they proceed so far as to urge that the king should provide for the expenses of his establishment without aid from parliament. On the matter of his household arrangements Henry readily assented; and on the matter of his expenses he promised to do as desired so soon as convenient.†

In dealing with ecclesiastical matters the commons did not scruple to complain of the king as allowing the burdens of his wars to fall much too lightly on the clergy. The archbishop of Canterbury said, in reply, that the clergy paid their tenths more frequently than the laity did their fifteenths; that they sent their tenants to join the king's standard whenever required to do so; and that they were themselves doing him no small service by engaging in religious services, day and night, in his favour. The Speaker touched slightingly on those *spiritual* contributions of the clergy to which

* Plac. *Parl.* 499–525.

† Ibid. iii. 525–549.

the archbishop appeared to attach so much importance—whereupon the primate threw himself at the feet of the king, imploring him to use his authority for the protection of the church, declaring himself willing to encounter any danger from fire or sword, rather than see the church bereft of the smallest portion of her rights.* But the commons were not to be diverted from their course by these passionate proceedings. They drew up a statistical paper, which was said to show, that the possessions of the prelates, the abbots, and the priors, were so great, that there should be contributed to the service of the crown from that source, over and above the contribution at present made, a sum equal in value to the service claimed from 13 earls, 1500 knights, and 6200 esquires!

When these figures came before the king, his fortunes were in an improved condition. He could afford to evade the questions thus raised, and he did so. Discouraged at this point, the commons directed their attention to another. They prayed that all ecclesiastics might be placed in subjection to the lay tribunals in civil cases, as in former times; and one effect of the recent execution of John Badby, was to lead the commons to petition for a repeal of the statute for burning heretics. To the former petition the king did not—perhaps dared not—assent; with the latter, he so far complied, that no further execution for heresy took place during his reign.†

Arundel's constitutions.

While the reformers in parliament employed themselves after this manner, the prelates were assiduous in their endeavours to strengthen themselves in the more favourable position which new circumstances had assigned to them. In a convocation of the clergy in 1408, a series of 'constitutions,' attributed to archbishop Arundel, were adopted, which declared that the pope, as holding the keys of life and death for the

* Wals. *Hist.* 371 et seq.

† Walsing. *Hist.* 421, 422. Plac. *Parl.* 623.

world to come, is to us, not in the place of man, but in the place of God; that, in consequence, the guilt of those who question his decisions is the guilt of rebellion and sacrilege; that to bring the heresies and mischiefs which have been so long tolerated in the land to an end, it is expedient to determine that no man shall in future attempt to preach without the licence of his ordinary; that preaching shall be restricted in all cases to the simple matters prescribed in the instruction provided in aid of the ignorance of priests, and beginning *ignorantia sacerdotum;* that any clergyman offending against this rule shall forfeit his temporalities, and be liable to the penalty awarded in the recent statute against heresy; that any church into which a teacher of this description is admitted shall be laid under an interdict; that no schoolmaster shall mix religious instruction with the teaching of youth, nor permit discussion about the sacraments, nor any reading of the Scriptures in English; that all books of the kind written by John Wycliffe, and others of his time, or hereafter to be written, be banished from schools, halls, and all places whatsoever; that no man shall hereafter translate any part of scripture into English on his own authority; and that all persons convicted of making or using such translations shall be punished as favourers of error and heresy; that no man shall be allowed to dispute concerning the decrees of the church, whether given in her general or provincial councils, nor to take exception to authorized customs, such as making pilgrimage to shrines, adoring images, or the cross, on pain of being accounted heretical; that all possible means be used to root out the heresies known under the 'new and damnable name of Lollardy,' as everywhere, so especially in the University of Oxford, once so famous for its orthodoxy, but of late so poisoned with false doctrines; and, finally, inasmuch as the sin of heresy is more enormous than treason, since it is resistance to the authority of Heaven as present in the church, all persons suspected

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of this offence, and refusing to appear before the proper authorities when cited, shall be adjudged guilty.*

Honest John Foxe, in making note of these 'constitutions,' adds, 'Who would have thought, by these 'laws and constitutions, so substantially founded, so 'circumspectly provided, so diligently executed, but 'that the name and memory of this persecuted sect 'should have been utterly rooted up, and never should 'have stood! And yet such be the works of the 'Lord, passing all man's admiration, notwithstanding 'all this, so far was it off that the number and courage 'of these good men were indeed vanquished, that they 'rather *multiplied daily*, especially in *London*, and *Lin-'colnshire*, *Norfolk*, *Herefordshire*, in *Shrewsbury*, in '*Calais*, and divers other places.'†

Care, it will be seen, was taken, to remind the parties concerned, of the existence of the 'late statute' against heresy; and that the terrors of that statute might not slumber, the object of these 'constitutions' appears to have been, to give as wide a latitude, and, at the same time, as deep an enormity, as possible, to the crime of heresy. From this time forth, the slightest sign of disaffection towards received opinions or customs might be construed as warranting suspicion of heretical pravity; while that pravity itself was declared to be a more deadly sin than treason—the sin for which men were hung, drawn, and quartered being treason only against man, while heresy was treason against God.

Lord Cobham.

During the ascendency of the House of Lancaster, many Englishmen perished, under the charge of heresy. Of these, the most conspicuous was Lord

* Labbe, *Concilia*, vii. 1935–1948. The licence thus given to the clergy did not prevent the commons from passing a rigorous law against the old evil of provisors, first-fruits, &c.—*Stat.* 6 Henry IV. In the following year laws still more stringent were passed, forbidding the disposal of livings by provisors, either on the part of the court of Rome, or of the crown.—7 Henry IV. c. 6, 8. Collier, i. 620–627.

† *Acts and Mon.* i. 986, 987.

Cobham; a man, says Horace Walpole, 'whose virtue 'made him a reformer, and whose courage made him 'a martyr.' The fate of Cobham is the great blot in the reign of Henry V. It is true, Lord Cobham was known as a disciple of Wycliffe, and as a zealous patron of the class of persons known as Wycliffites. But his disaffection embraced neither disloyalty nor impiety. It had respect to alleged errors and corruptions, which were said to be rooted in the existing church system; and his honest aim was to remove these disfigurements, through the influence of a more enlightened public opinion. But Henry V. was a skilful and brave soldier, and nothing more. His slight attachment to literature had respect to it only in its relation to chivalry. He cared nothing about popular liberty—did not understand it. With him, it was as much a matter of course that a man should obey his priest, as that a soldier should do the bidding of his officer. Such submission Cobham was not prepared to render, and as he could not cease to be honest, he was not permitted to live.*

Persecutions under Chicheley.

Archbishop Chicheley, who succeeded Arundel, surpassed him in zeal against the reformers. He ordered special inquisition to be made through every diocese in his province twice a year, that no persons suspected of heresy might anywhere escape detection. In any parish which had fallen under suspicion, three respectable inhabitants might be selected, and made to answer the inquiries of official persons on oath, touching any persons or circumstances of their neighbourhood. Of the multitudes who were apprehended by such means, some recanted; others withstood much inquisitorial scrutiny, and remained long in prison; while others saw their whole property confiscated.

During the reigns of Henry V. and VI., scarcely a year passed in which men might not be seen perish-

* The case of Lord Cobham is dispassionately considered by Sharon Turner, ii. 451–454; and by Dean Milman, v. 529, 531–534.

ing at the stake as heretics, either in Smithfield or on Tower Hill. In the registry of the diocese of Lincoln, some time later, more than five hundred names are found as those of persons against whom proceedings had been taken on the charge or suspicion of heresy.* We know not that even these were all the names so registered; but the history of Lincoln in this respect may be taken as an indication of the course of proceeding over the whole kingdom. In the earlier part of this century, the law provided that the property of a heretic should be divided into three parts, the first of which fell to the king, the second to the city in which the conviction occurred, the third to the *judge!* Subsequently, the property confiscated went wholly to the crown.†

Effect of the measures.

It requires some effort of imagination to estimate to the full the suffering which must have been diffused through the homes of the people of England by this network of agencies. The more so, inasmuch as it was scarcely possible that the sincere reformer should guard against betraying his feeling continually. The profligate would take note of his seriousness. Even that would be enough to warrant suspicion. The superstitious would observe what he did, or abstained from doing, in regard to the religious observances of the times; and from such appearances would form their conclusions, and indulge in their dangerous talk. Not to worship as others did, or not to worship at all, was alike perilous. To be in any respect singular was to be suspected. There were probably enemies to the hierarchy who could reconcile themselves to a life of false appearances, on the plea that the foe with whom they had to deal was base and treacherous, and as such had no claim to be dealt with otherwise. Such men might long escape detection, and the number of such was probably considerable.

* Walsingham. Foxe, *Acts and Mon.* ii. 33. Collier, i. 632, 634, 645.

† Foxe, Lyndewoode, and Wilkins (vol. iii.), furnish large evidence on this subject.

But the conscientious Lollard could hardly exist without being known as such, and must have felt that his property, and liberty, and life, were constantly at the mercy of any malevolent or misguided informer in his neighbourhood. So did the clergy perpetuate and augment the disaffection of the people. The best and the boldest were almost everywhere arrayed against them.

Excesses of the reformers.

But it must not be supposed that the aims of the discontented were always restricted to safe and reasonable limits. The want of a little more worldly wisdom did much, and the persecutions which followed them did more, to dispose the passions of some of the sufferers towards the most reprehensible maxims and proceedings. The conduct of the disaffected was at times such as no government could be expected to tolerate. In an outbreak at Abingdon, for example, in the reign of Henry VI., in which the monastery of that place was assailed, and the clergy greatly menaced, the leader of the multitude is said to have declared that he would make priests' heads as common as sheep's heads. His own head was exposed on London-bridge.*

This no sufficient excuse for the clergy.

But the fault of the government and of the clergy, was in refusing to distinguish between the conscientious and the merely turbulent—or between the reasonable and unreasonable in the complaints of the better sort. Opinions described as hostile, not only to church authority, but to all social order, were exaggerated, and attributed in their exaggerated form to the most moderate reformers, in common with the most violent. But, had the mode of attack been more discriminating, there is no reason to suppose that the result would have been greatly different. As commonly happens in such cases, it was found, that to ask for little, was to be charged with magnifying trifles, and with fostering discontent without reason; while to ask for much, was to be denounced as impious and disloyal. The

* Hall, 166. Fabyan, 422. Stowe, 372.

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foregone conclusion, in either case, was a conclusion against change.

In the first parliament under Henry V., the commons renewed their complaints against the wealth, and the exceptionable lives, of the clergy. But Chicheley, who had then become primate, took alarm, and spared no pains to divert the attention of the king and the nation from such dangerous questions to the glory of a war with France. With a less chivalrous king this policy might not have been availing. But with Henry V. it was successful, and, for a while, our history was much influenced by that success.

Reaction in Oxford.

In 1441, the University of Oxford chose twelve of its members to examine the writings of Wycliffe, and the report made, presented two hundred and sixty-seven opinions, taken from those writings, which were described as 'worthy of fire.' Besides the opinions, said these worthy 'masters,' which merit extreme condemnation, there are many more of like quality; and they assure the primate, that the disciples of the man who had filled the university with such doctrine, were so many throughout the province of Canterbury, that only by the sharpest process would it be possible to cleanse the field of the church from such tares. Such was Oxford—so changed from her former self—in 1441; and such continued to be her state to the close of the fifteenth century. In all this, moreover, she was what the ecclesiastical power of that time had made her; for the clerical influence, which had been kept in some check during the last century, had now become exclusive and dominant in all her affairs.*

* Wood's *Hist. et Antiq. Univers. Oxon.* i. 216, 217. Such was the ignorance of many of these ecclesiastical persons, that the English convocation, in 1432, passed a canon which required that no man should be made a bishop or a vicar-general who had not taken a degree.—Ducke's *Chicheley*, 40. Six years later, the University of Oxford laments over the general unfitness of the clergy for the discharge of their duties, and urges that no man should be appointed to a benefice of any description who had not graduated.—Ibid. 45. Fuller, ii. 409–412.

Such, from various causes, was the revived influence of the English clergy at this time, that the luxury, pomp, and pretension of the order had never been greater in our history. Not a dogma, not a usage, that had been censured in the outspoken times of Edward III. or of Richard II., was surrendered, or in any degree softened. On the contrary, so great was the rebound in ecclesiastical affairs, that the excesses of the past were all more or less exaggerated. The Franciscan learnt to change his undergarment of haircloth for one of the softest linen; his waistcord of rope for one of silk; and his barefooted travel for the use of sandals, carefully wrought and richly adorned by devout nuns, who found agreeable employment in such works of piety. The Dominicans innovated after the same manner on the institute of their founder. At the same time, the houses and churches of these orders rose to the splendour of palaces. To the hostile criticism sometimes provoked by such appearances, it was deemed enough to answer that the pope had not taken exception to them; and that to the Holy See, and not to themselves, pertained the wealth deemed so inconsistent with their professed renunciation of all ecclesiastical endowments.* But if such was the course of the religious orders, it is natural to suppose that such tendencies were still more conspicuous in the lives of the secular clergy. And such was the fact. The palace of the archbishop of York, brother to the great earl of Warwick, in the time of Edward IV., was more Oriental than European in its gorgeousness, and its endless adaptations to the luxurious taste of its owner.† Much was sometimes said in parliament, and even at court, concerning such ostentation and indulgence, as unbecoming in spiritual persons. But the passions fed by such means were not to be controlled. One of the hardships imposed on the higher clergy in

* Turner, *Hist. Eng.* iii. 128, 129.

† See Fuller's account of an enormous feast given by this prelate.—*Church Hist.* ii. 477.

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the time of Henry V. was, that they should not travel with gilt bridles, nor with more than twenty horses in their train. Such restrictions must have been deemed expedient, if not necessary, or the scandal of publishing them would never have been incurred.*

But if an archbishop of York under Edward IV. was so well known for the princely splendour of his establishment, one of his predecessors, who died on the accession of Henry VI., was no less notorious for the licentiousness of his life, even to his old age, his contempt of the divine precepts being compensated by his zeal against heretics. Our great dramatist, too, following old histories, has described the death-scene of cardinal Beaufort, bishop of Winchester, in that same reign—how the visions of power, which ended in weakness, and of wealth, which passed away as a shadow, haunted his last hours.† With such lives in the governing, it is easy to imagine the manners which obtained among the governed.

In a petition presented to parliament by the clergy

* Wilkins, ii. 413.

† 'This man,' says the Chronicler, 'was son to John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, descended of an honourable lineage, but more noble in blood than notable in learning, high in stomach, and huge in countenance, rich above the measure of all men, and to few liberal, disdainful of his kindred, and dreadful to his lovers, preferring money before friendship, many things beginning and nothing performing. His insatiable covetousness, and hope of long life, made him both to forget God, his prince, and himself, in his latter days; for his doctor, John Baker, his privy councillor and his chaplain, wrote, that he, lying on his bed, said these words: 'Why should I die, having so much riches? If the whole realm would save my life, I am able either by policy to get it, or by riches to buy it. Fie! will not death be hired? Will money do nothing? When my nephew of Bedford died I thought myself half up the wheel. But when my other nephew of Gloucester deceased, then I thought myself able to be equal with kings—and so thought to increase my treasure in hope to have worn a triple crown. But I see now the world faileth me; and so am I deceived, praying you all to pray for me.'—Hall, 210, 211. Such was the character of this man, that he was charged with having hired an assassin to murder Henry V., when prince Henry, and with having urged the prince to depose his father Henry IV. in his lifetime.—Hollinshed, 591. Ducke's *Chicheley*.

in 1449, it is stated that many of their order, both religious and secular, had been indicted for felony, and the petitioners do not blush to pray that no priest charged with rape or felony at any time before the 1st of June *next*, should be accounted guilty, on condition that a noble be paid for each priest in the kingdom to the king's exchequer. The answer of the king was, let the nobles be voted by the convocations of York and Canterbury, and let it so be. The convocations voted that the sum should be paid, and the enactment pending on that payment became a statute of the realm.*

We are scarcely surprised, accordingly, that an archbishop in the year 1455 should be found describing certain rectors and vicars as having become openly vagrant and dissolute, wandering through the kingdom in search of gain, neglecting their spiritual duties, wasting their revenues, allowing their houses, and even their churches, to fall into decay, giving themselves to feasting, drunkenness, fornication, and other vices, being often, not only unskilled in the work of teaching, but so ignorant as to be incapable of such service.† Some ten years later, the archbishop of York lays open a similar state of things as existing in his province, and enjoins that no clergyman should be present at forbidden sports and plays, should frequent taverns, or be seen in the company of lewd women.‡ To expect great purity of manners in an opulent establishment in such times would be unreasonable. But the facts, and the language we have adduced, suggest that the corruption in those days must have been deep and general, much beyond the ordinary in such cases.

That there were churchmen who condemned these evils, may be accepted as evidence that the sense of propriety was not wholly extinct in that quarter.

* *Rolls Parl.* v. 153. *Statutes*, i. 352.

† Wilkins, *Con.* iii. 573, 374.

‡ Ibid.

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But the effect of such admonitions seems to have borne too near a resemblance to that usually produced by royal proclamations against vice. The rebuke was accepted, but amendment was postponed.

Decline of learning.

In the face of such facts it will not be supposed that learning was in a very satisfactory condition. We have seen how Oxford could acquit herself in regard to the doctrine and disciples of Wycliffe in 1441. At that time, the meridian of Oxford seems hardly distinguishable from that of Salamanca or Madrid in their worst days. We feel little surprised, accordingly, when we find an ex-chancellor of Oxford complaining heavily, in 1455 of the decay of learning in that university. The causes of this state of things are largely enumerated, such as the liberty of non-residence, the custom of excessive pluralities, the open sale of university degrees to the incompetent and unworthy, and the frequent promotion of such men by papal authority, or by court and family influence. Inducement to study was in this manner superseded, and the parishes of England were filled with men so wanting in fitness for their office, that 'the country was overspread with 'ignorance.'* The religious houses added greatly to these disorders, by possessing themselves of livings as endowments, and by showing themselves much more concerned about the tithe than about the teaching. The foundations in Oxford had become so poor, that scholars often became travelling mendicants to obtain the means of subsistence—the chancellor himself, in his pity for their necessities, giving them certificates in that capacity. Two of these begging scholars made their call at the castle-gate of a nobleman. Their credentials stated, that, among other claims to public sympathy and favour, the bearers possessed the gift of poesy. Whereupon the baron instructed his servants to take the strangers to the well, and placing one in one bucket and his companion in the other, to

* Wood's *Antiq. Univer. Oxon.* lib. i. 220.

let them drop alternately into the water until each should have composed a suitable verse on this novelty in his experience. The baron and his companions, it is said, made themselves exceedingly merry over this exhibition, and the scholars, having each furnished the verse required from him, were allowed to depart.* That brutality of this sort was a common thing we do not suppose, but that such a proceeding should have taken place at all, suggests much as to the status of the man of letters, and the condition of society about him in those days.

It would be well if even such indications of feeling on the part of the English nobility in the fifteenth century were the worst to be recorded of them. But such is not the case. Their coarseness, and ignorance of letters, are among the most venial of their faults. The strong features in their character are of a darker and more revolting description.

The English aristocracy and the Civil War.

With the premature death of Henry V. came the minority, and the feeble sway, of Henry VI.; and from the accession of Henry VI. to the death of Richard III.—an interval of nearly half a century—the supreme power in England became a prize to be contended for by a succession of opposite factions. In those factions there were, as usual, the leaders and the led; but the absence of principle, of honour, of humanity, by which these interminable combinations on either side were characterized, was such as to show, that for a time at least, there was nothing in the maxims or in the spirit of Machiavel that might not find a large home in England. The irregular accession of Henry IV. appears to have done much to destroy the divinity which is said to be about the person of a king. Henceforth, sovereignty, like any other elevation, might be seized by the hand of the strong, according to circumstances; and each aspirant had his followers, who hoped to share in the spoil consequent

* Wood's *Hist. Univer. Oxon.* 225.

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on his success. In pursuit of this object, the ties of gratitude, of friendship, of nature, all became as nothing. So intense had the passions of men become, that restraint was hardly thought of, except as seen to be necessary to success. Every struggle became a struggle, not merely for office or emolument, but for life or death. Men had become to so frightful an extent unscrupulous and untrustworthy, that the victors, whether in the court or in the field, never deemed themselves safe until assured that the vanquished were no more. When court intrigue broke out into open war, the cry of the opposing forces commonly was—no quarter; and those who were so unhappy as to become captives, became such to be butchered in cold blood, often amidst cruel taunts and mockings. Englishmen seemed to live, not to feel that they had really a country, but simply to follow their chiefs, and to do their bidding, however atrocious. In these strifes, their hatred of each other was more bitter than they had ever manifested towards a foreign enemy. Passions are hereditary, and the war passion through the nation, seems by this time to have become so strong from indulgence, that, in the absence of an outlet abroad, it broke forth in demoniacal force at home. The nobles were proud of their high blood, of their territorial wealth, of their chivalrous courage, and of their supposed capacity to judge of affairs, and to act in relation to them. But to mental culture, and to the refinements which spring from it, they were marvellously indifferent. The earl of Worcester and lord Rivers were exceptions to this description; but both were among those who perished under the hand of the executioner. Of the former, Caxton writes,—'The axe then did at one blow cut off more 'learning than was in the heads of all the surviving 'nobility;' and Caxton knew the men of whom he thus spoke. Devoid of the slightest tincture of letters, their home was with their field sports and their tenantry, or with the retainers who fed upon their

venison, and whose Homeric feastings often left their heads too light in the evening to be well at ease in the morning. We might have supposed that the unsettledness, the barbarism, and the miseries which were diffused by such tastes and habits would have sufficed to teach men the needed lesson in less than half a century. But it was not so. So terrible was the scourge which thus fell on all the great families, that when the first Tudor ascended the throne, he found himself at the head of a parliament which included a House of Commons, but which could hardly be said to retain a peerage. Apart from the clergy, the Upper House had become a faint shadow of its former self.

Of course, the men who engaged in these contentions, did their best to assign plausible reasons in support of them, though the reasons alleged were often far from being the real spring of their actions. In the reign of Henry VI., those who governed in the place of the king were accused of governing corruptly, and the government and the church were said to be leagued together to infringe the liberty of the subject, and to persecute religious opinion. When the king came to years, and married Margaret of Anjou, the masculine and haughty temper of the queen caused the lines which separated between faction and faction to become stronger, until civil war, and the dethronement of the house of Lancaster in favour of the house of York was the result. Edward IV., who owed his sovereignty to the revolution thus brought about by the great earl of Warwick, could hardly feel himself a king in the presence of the authority assumed by that famous king-maker. His secret marriage with a subject, and one not connected with the great families; and his disposition to elevate other families, especially the family of his queen, to counterbalance the influence of Warwick and his adherents, led to feud, to civil war, and to a temporary restoration of the dethroned Henry. But Edward IV., though a Sardanapalus in time of

peace, could become a sage and a hero in the time of war. He won his way back to the throne from which he had been expelled, numbering Warwick himself among the slain. What Warwick had been to Edward IV. the powerful duke of Buckingham became to Richard III. He had favoured the elevation of Richard, but his expectations became great, and he perished in attempting to demolish the work of his own hands. And it is impossible to say how long this succession of tragedies—of foul frauds and dark deeds—would have continued, had not the rival claims of the houses of York and Lancaster been made to meet in the person of Henry VII., and had not the character of that monarch been such as it has become in history.

CHAPTER II.

THE DAWN.

The English parliament under the Lancastrians and Yorkists.

THE jealousies, and the ultimate strifes between the houses of Lancaster and York, were not favourable to regularity in anything; and the general unsettledness of affairs, during that period, is reflected in our parliamentary history. But the rivalries which were afoot made each party desirous to secure adherents, and from this cause, more than from enlightened considerations, the power of the English parliament may be said to have increased, rather than to have diminished, during the fifteenth century. The title of the Lancastrians was well known to be a parliamentary title; and if the Yorkists based their claim on the principle of legitimacy, they were careful to strengthen their hold on the popular feeling by affecting to discountenance the arbitrary and intolerant policy of the rival dynasty. It is in consonance with these facts, that we find the populace, and the more wealthy among the commonalty, especially in London and the adjacent counties, with the Yorkists. Edward IV., indeed, while he had fair words for the House of Commons, was not a prince to appreciate such institutions. The records of parliament during his reign are singularly meagre and unsatisfactory. We know, however, that, in common with all the leaders of his times, he could strain the law of treason to serve his purpose; and that he introduced the bad custom of calling upon his subjects to furnish him with loans under the new name of 'benevolences,' evading by this means the authority of parliament in regard to taxation. Had his life been prolonged, he would have been com-

pelled to desist from that course. Immediately after his decease, the commons protested, in strong and even bitter terms, against his proceedings in this form, and Richard III. promised to avoid such evil precedents.* We have seen something of the firmness with which the commons remonstrated against both civil and ecclesiastical grievances under Henry IV. and Henry V.; and if such symptoms of public feeling are of less frequent occurrence in the next two reigns, we have no reason to suppose that the feeling abroad had ceased to be the same. Hence, if settled times are to come, the landmarks of the constitution may be said to be safe, and patriotic men may hope to take their stand upon them.

But at present the times are not settled. Through this whole century there is a ferment of religious feeling, allied more or less with the new religious opinions, which is not to be allayed. The party on the side of the past is strong, but the party on the side of something different from the past is also strong, and promises to become stronger.

The secular clergy assailed by the religious orders.

The old jealousy between the clergy and the religious orders was perpetuated and much embittered through this period. The mendicant orders, especially the Franciscans, continued their assaults on the doctrine of Wycliffe. Treatise after treatise was published on that subject.† But, strange to say, this did not prevent these disputants from using the weapons of the reformers when assailing the secular clergy. They denounced, almost in the terms of Wycliffe, the 'endowing' of the church, as the great source of her

* *Rot. Parl.* vi. 193, 241. 1 Ric. III. c. 2. The clergy, in the end, came to be favourable to the ascendency of the Yorkists; but it was in consequence of the crimes and devastations perpetrated by the Lancastrians from the north, with the real or apparent connivance of Queen Margaret. They did not take much part in affairs during the civil wars.

† Gualter Dysse, Richard Maydesley, and R. Lanynfans, are among the names mentioned frequently, but the first place in this polemical list must be assigned to Netter, better known as Thomas Walden.

corruption. In 1425, one William Russell, at the head of a Franciscan convent in London, denied the divine authority of tithes, and insisted that they ought not to be paid to the parochial clergy. They might rest on human law, or on long custom, but, according to the Scripture, they should be left to be applied to pious or charitable uses, at the will of the donor. Great excitement was produced by this teaching. But such were the speculations which were being diffused within the enclosure of the church, and which came from time to time to the surface.*

Forty years later, a Carmelite friar, named Parker, preached in St. Paul's, that the only revenue of the clergy should consist in the voluntary offerings of the faithful—that Christ and his apostles sought no other. On the following Sunday, a doctor of reputation assailed these positions in a discourse from the same pulpit. Subsequently, another Carmelite, the master of a convent, undertook the defence of the impugned doctrine, insisting that his brother Carmelite, who had preceded him, had simply delivered the doctrine of Scripture. The preacher concluded by announcing, that the subject would be further discussed in his school on the following Friday. The discussion of Friday was resumed on the next Sunday. Those who had learnt this doctrine from another source, looked

* Wilkins, *Con.* iii. 433–439. Russell was required by convocation to recant, but the day before that fixed for his recantation he made his escape from the kingdom. His doctrine was condemned by the University of Oxford; and an oath was exacted from all students admitted to degrees requiring the renunciation of Russell's opinions. This oath remained in force until 1564.—Duck's *Life of Chicheley.* Wood's *Antiq. Univer. Oxon.* i. 210, 211. *Register*, Chicheley, 35. One remarkable proof of the prevalence of such tenets is furnished by the conduct of Pain, who was sent as a delegate by the English convocation to the Council of Basle. Pain was so bold as to argue before the council against the possession of estates, or of temporal jurisdiction by the clergy. Polemar, a Spanish archdeacon, replied to him at great length, but did not convince him. 'Tis evident,' says Collier, 'that Pain was a man of learning, and one of the chief of the Wycliffite party.'—i. 661–663.

on, as we may suppose, with no little interest. Many among the people proclaimed themselves believers in the Carmelite tenets. An eloquent preacher was engaged by the clergy to show, that if our Lord accepted the willing offerings of the people, He did not solicit them in the manner of the mendicants. His reasoning produced some impression. But an able Dominican now entered the lists, and having delivered himself with much effect in the cathedral, he invited the people to attend the Carmelite chapel in the afternoon, where a venerable doctor would deliver his judgment on the question. Notices were posted on the church doors. Crowds made their way to the chapel; and John Mylverton himself, provincial of the order of the Carmelites, ascended the pulpit. He said he had heard that one of his brethren had been much defamed, charged with error and blasphemy. But he stood there prepared to show that the doctrine so described was the doctrine of the Scripture and of the fathers. His manner was grave, and most earnest. The auditory, especially the common people, were greatly moved by it. The archbishop of Canterbury, who made report of these proceedings to the pope, soliciting his advice and help, says, 'We know that some thought, and others were 'heard to say, if Christ was so poor, why should his 'followers, the pope, the cardinals, the archbishops, 'bishops, and abbots, own such large possessions. 'It is clear that priests should live on offerings 'freely made to them, that the church became apostate 'from the day on which she was endowed, and that 'good service would be done to religion and to the 'nation if churchmen were stripped of their wealth, 'and left in this matter to follow their Lord and his 'apostles.' So strong, and so general, was this feeling, that it was with difficulty, we are told, that the people were restrained from breaking out into open insurrection. As will be expected, the primate did not solicit the aid of the pontiff in vain. Mylverton was summoned to Rome, and passed two years in one

of the dungeons of St. Angelo. But so did opinion in the direction of ecclesiastical change continue to do its work in England during the fifteenth century.*

In this teaching of the mendicant orders there was nothing strictly new. Their institutes rested on this doctrine concerning religious endowments, as implied, if not expressed. But the times had changed. A tenet which had been accounted harmless in the thirteenth century, becomes something very different in the fifteenth. The Mendicants might follow their own rule in this particular; but that they should impugn the contrary rule of the endowed clergy was felt to be a grave matter. It was all very well to flank, or supplement, the parochial clergy with these voluntary orders. But that the clergy themselves should become voluntaries, was not to be conceded for a moment.

Reformed doctrine avowed by some of the secular clergy.

Nor were the Mendicants the only ecclesiastics whose labours served to impair the foundations of the existing system. The third volume of Wilkins' *Councils* furnishes many instances of endowed clergymen embracing the doctrine of the Mendicants concerning the revenues of their order, and holding and inculcating opinions widely at variance with the faith and usage of their church. They said much to discourage the adoration of the cross, the worship of images, and prayers to saints. These usages were all described as savouring of idolatry. They denied that the bread in the eucharist ever ceased to be bread. While opposed to religious endowments, they condemned the begging customs of the friars. In the spirit of Wycliffe, they condemned the religious orders altogether, as being institutes of man, which reflected on the institutes of Christ as wanting in adaptation to the needs of the church. They spoke of the Bible as the only pure and infallible authority in regard to

* *MS. Cotton Library*, Titus D. 10, p. 185 et seq. Cited in Turner, iii. 132.

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religion, and urged the people to trust in the promise of God as there given them, to the exclusion of all other dependence. Pilgrimages were worse than useless, the only true pilgrimage being to do the commandments of God. The most conspicuous among the clergy who suffered during this interval, as holding opinions more or less of this complexion, was the devout and conscientious Reginald Peacock, successively bishop of St. Asaph and Chichester. Among his patrons were men of the first rank; but, after much effort, his enemies prevailed against him, and the influence of his friends could do no more than abate the severity of the sentence which sent him from his episcopal residence to a prison. His history and sufferings belong to the latter half of the fifteenth century. Like many more in those evil times, he made a sort of recantation, and died unhappily as the consequence.*

The new opinions continue to influence the laity.

But if curates, and incumbents, and even bishops, are found to be thus infected with the new opinions, we may readily imagine that the portion of the laity open to such impressions would be much greater. In grave affairs, the upper ranks move much more cautiously than the lower. They see further into consequences, and have more at stake. We do not expect, accordingly, even in the most favourable times, to see much movement in that quarter, until the tendencies lower down have become ripe for change; and from what we have seen of the character of English aristocracy, in the age under review, anything like an enlightened religious earnestness was the last thing

* Bale, *Cent. VIII.* Godwin *in Episc. Cicestrens.* Collier, i. 674–676. See Lewis's *Life and Sufferings of Reginald Peacock.* Two priests of the diocese of Lincoln, named Robert Hake and Thomas Drayton, were summoned before a synod in 1425, and charged with refusing to kneel to a crucifix, with having books in their possession opposed to the doctrine of transubstantiation, and with affirming that monastic orders and auricular confession were inventions of the devil, &c. &c. Similar proceedings took place in the convocation of 1429.

to be expected from them. But it is manifest from the language of the ruling churchmen in this century, that they regarded the townspeople, and the commonalty at large, as adherents to the new learning, and as disposed to favour it in secret, if not prepared to avow their attachment to it openly. Such was no doubt to a great extent the fact. So many works were written setting forth the views of the reformers in the language of the people, that it became one of the pressing questions put to suspected and accused persons—have you in your possession any books written in English; have you read such books, have you any knowledge of such books, or of persons having any such knowledge?

One popular work of this description bore the name of the *Lantern of Light*. It was written some time before the middle of this century. It described the pope as Antichrist; as the head of the beast, with the prelates as the body, and the religious orders as the tail. Papal decrees it declared to be of no sort of authority. Indulgences were a delusion. Pilgrimages were a demoralizing superstition. Spiritual obedience to clergymen who failed in their spiritual duties was a sin. The attempts made by the bishops to restrict the office of preaching to their own licensed priests marked them as the tools of Antichrist. It was the duty of the clergy to live in modest houses, and after a modest fashion; and to leave the decorating of their holy things with silver and gold, and their many chantings, for the study of the Scriptures, and the preaching of the Gospel. The reason, says the book, why men who entertain such views are so bitterly persecuted, is simply that the secular clergy may retain their possessions, and that the Mendicants may have the mind of the people at their disposal, and turn it to their uses.

This book was found in the possession of a fellmonger named Claydon, living in St. Martin's-lane, near Aldersgate. This man had already suffered six years' confinement in the hell-pits which prisons then

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were, for his opinions, two years in Conway Castle, and four in the Fleet. His servants were summoned to give evidence against him. One of these deposed that the *Lantern of Light* was often read on festival days before the family; the other said that he was present when the author, named John Greene, brought the book to his master, and he heard them converse about it. Claydon, in full memory of the dungeons of Conway Castle and the Fleet, when questioned concerning the treatise, answered that it contained things which he believed to be good for his soul. He perished at the stake in Smithfield.*

Claydon was one of a class. Had there been men in power, in those days, disposed and able to shield such persons, we have evidence enough to show that their numbers would have been found to be much greater than is now known to history. Conscientiousness may be mistaken, but without it there can be no greatness in a people. The country which has had its age of Wycliffe and Chaucer, must have something better still in the distance. Amidst all the disorders of this century, the commerce and the wealth of the nation continued to increase; and in our history, these elements of progress have been inseparable from the progress of popular intelligence and freedom.†

Some encouragement given to learning.

Among the few signs of intellectual life in England in the fifteenth century, we may reckon the additions made to the foundations of Oxford and Cambridge. In Oxford, Lincoln College was founded by the joint liberality of Richard Fleming and Thomas Rotherham, who were successively bishops of Lincoln. All Souls' owed its origin to the liberality of archbishop Chicheley; and Magdalen College to that of Wayneflete, bishop of Winchester, and lord chancellor. During the same period King's College, Cambridge, and Eton College, near Windsor, were founded by the munifi-

* Wilkins, *Con.* iii. 372–374, 396, 398, 399.
† Anderson's *Hist. Com.* i. bk. iii.

cence of Henry VI., together with Queen's College, in the same university, by Margaret of Anjou, the queen of that monarch. Cambridge was further befriended by Robert Woodlark, provost of Eton, the founder of Catherine Hall.*

All these offerings in aid of the culture of the nation came, it will be seen, from the clergy, with the exception of those from Henry VI. and his consort.

The duke of Gloucester.

Humphrey duke of Gloucester was about the same time a great patron of letters. He founded a divinity school and public library in Oxford. He presented a library of 600 volumes to the university, 120 of which are said to have been valued at 1000*l.* in the money of that time. These volumes consisted of the most splendid and costly copies that could be procured, finely written on vellum, and richly embellished with miniatures and illuminations. Among them was a translation into French of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In fact, the duke did not confine his patronage to English scholars. Frenchmen and Italians shared in his bounty. Several eminent scholars were employed by him in transcribing valuable works, and in translating works from Greek into Latin and English. The library was opened in 1480.†

The earl of Worcester.

Lord Tiptoft, created earl of Worcester by Henry VI. has been mentioned as a scholar, and a lover of books. He contributed largely to the public library of the University of Oxford. He visited Jerusalem, and was resident for some years in Venice and Padua. In the latter places he purchased many manuscript works. Subsequently, he made some stay in Rome, that he might explore in the Vatican library. He there delivered a Latin oration, on some public occasion, before Æneas Sylvius, then Pius II., and his holiness

* Wood, *Hist. Univer. Ox.* 159 et seq. Fuller, *Hist. Camb.* 73 et seq.

† Warton *On Introd. of Learning into England*, p. cxiii. Wood, *Hist. Univer. Oxon.*

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is said to have shed tears of delight as he listened. His lordship was, further, a great patron of Caxton the printer. But the earl of Worcester was one of the many nobles who perished in the civil war. He was beheaded in 1470, in the forty-second year of his age, by command of the earl of Warwick, who had then taken the side of Henry VI., and had restored him to the throne. As the earl of Worcester was the only man so punished in connexion with that revolution, even in those sanguinary times, the presumption is strong, that he had become in some special sense an offender. We have reason to fear that the humanizing tendency of a love of letters had been neutralized in his case by other passions. He joined the Yorkists under Edward IV.; but he had been a zealous Lancastrian, and is said to have disgraced one of the triumphs of his party by excessive cruelty. Twenty gentlemen and noblemen are said to have been impaled by his order. The popular hatred gave him the name of the 'butcher.'* It is a mistake to suppose that there is any *necessary* connexion between a taste for intellectual pleasures and virtuous affections. The best educated, and the most cultivated, of our kings during the fifteenth century, was Richard III. As a rule, our nature is softened and elevated by the study of the humanities, but history shows a frightful margin of exceptions to this rule—in fact we meet with such ourselves every day.†

* Warkworth, *Chronicle, Contin. Croyl.* Stowe. Caxton speaks well of his patron, but his evidence is outweighed by other authorities. Walpole's declamation on this subject is of no value.—*Royal and Noble Authors*, ii. 59–67. Dugdale's *Baronage*, ii. 41. Leland's *De Script. Brit.* 475 et seq.

† In 1414, Worcester, as Sir John Tiptoft, made an impassioned speech in parliament against the Lollards. The effect was, that the lords presented a memorial to the king, stating that certain persons, by the instigation of the Enemy, were endeavouring 'in public sermons, as well as in conventicles, and in secret places called schools,' to move the kingdom to lay hands on the wealth of the clergy. The memorialists remind his majesty, that, of course, the next step would be to lay hands on the pos-

Earl Rivers, formerly Anthony Woodville and Lord Scales, was brother to the queen of Edward IV. England did not contain a braver or a more accomplished knight. As Lord Scales, he went through a great passage of arms with the famous Anthony the Bastard, of Normandy, in the presence of the court and the populace in Smithfield, and was the victor. The earl of Worcester presided on that occasion as lord high constable. Earl Rivers was also a patron of Caxton, and the translator of several works from the French, which are among the earliest issued from Caxton's press. This nobleman, too, perished on the block, when little more than forty years of age, by command of the then Duke of Gloucester, afterwards Richard III.* Earl Rivers.

With these friends of authors, and munificent patrons of literature, mention should be made of two really learned men of this century—Littleton and Fortescue. Sir Thomas Littleton was the son of a private gentleman in Devonshire. Having practised some time at the bar, he became reader in the Inner Temple. The inns of courts are said to have been crowded with students in this century, though few, it would seem, rose to eminence. In 1455, Henry VI. raised Littleton to the office of judge of the Marshalsea court. In the following year he became judge of the Common Pleas. He saw the crown pass from Henry VI. to more than one successor; but, amidst the storm and change of the times, Littleton was allowed to retain his position undisturbed. It was not necessary, in administering the law as between subject and Lord Littleton.

sessions of temporal lords, whose rights in relation to property were by no means more sacred than those of the clergy; and they accordingly pray the king, that a stringent law may be passed to put an end to the promulgation of such opinions.—Fuller's *Church Hist.* bk. iv. 162. The Lancastrians, as we have seen, won the clergy by this policy, but they exasperated the people.

* *Biographia Brit.* ii. Walpole, *Royal and Noble Authors*, i. 67 et seq.

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subject, that he should become conspicuous as a politician. His great work on tenures is well known to all law students as the basis of the later work intitled, *Coke upon Littleton.**

Sir John Fortescue.

Sir John Fortescue was the son of Sir Henry Fortescue, lord chief justice of Ireland. Sir John became reader at Lincoln's Inn. Students crowded to hear his lectures, and gave him loud proof of their admiration. In 1430 he was made sergeant-at-law; in 1442 chief justice. Having filled this high office with great reputation for nearly twenty years, he shared the exile of the family of Henry VI. and was attainted of treason. During his residence in France queen Margaret often consulted him on her affairs, but his chief employment was in superintending the education of her son prince Edward. It was for the instruction of that prince that Fortescue wrote his *De Laudibus Legum Angliæ*. This treatise describes the constitution of England as consisting in a monarchy limited by law, and as being thus distinguished from all absolute monarchies. Sir John was present at the fatal battle of Tewkesbury in 1471. The victory of that day destroyed the last hope of the Lancastrians. The life of the chief justice was spared. Subsequently he was restored to liberty, and probably to the possession of his forfeited property. In the hope of doing something towards putting an end to a contest which had now become apparently useless, Fortescue wrote a tract in defence of the title of Edward IV. Another of his publications, of high value, was a treatise on the *Difference between an Absolute and a Limited Monarchy*. His former treatise, expository of the same principles, was written in Latin, and designed for the use of prince Edward the Lancastrian; this work was written in English, and was designed for the use of Edward IV. There might be disputes concerning who should be king; but, in the judgment of

* *Biographia Brit.* v. *De Laudibus Legum Angliæ*, c. 49.

Sir John Fortescue, there could be no dispute about the fact that the king of England is a king, who, in the language of Bracton, and in the language of our statutes, is to govern, not according to his pleasure, but according to law. The publication of the treatises of this able and virtuous judge has done much towards settling the question concerning the alleged innovations upon the English Constitution on the part of the Tudors and Stuarts. Sir John Fortescue lived to be ninety years of age. We should add, that Sir John's last-mentioned treatise furnishes an admirable specimen of the power of our language in the latter half of the fifteenth century.*

* See the memoir in the *Biographia Britannica*, vol. iii.

'A king of England,' writes Fortescue, 'cannot at his pleasure make any alterations in the laws of the land, for the nature of his government is not only regal, but political. Had it been merely regal, he would have a power to make what innovations and alterations he pleased in the laws of the kingdom, to impose tallages and other hardships upon the people, whether they would or no, without their consent; which sort of government the civil laws point out, when they declare *quod principi placuit, legis habet vigorem.* But it is much otherwise with a king whose government is political, because he can neither make any alteration or change in the laws of the realm, without the consent of his subjects, nor burthen them against their wills with strange impositions, so that a people governed by such laws as are made by their own consent and approbation enjoy their properties securely, and without the hazard of being deprived of them, either by the king or any other. The same things may be effected under an absolute prince, provided he do not degenerate into the tyrant. Of such a prince, Aristotle, in the third of his *Politics*, says, 'It is better for a city to be governed by a good man, than by good laws.' But because it does not always happen that the person presiding over a people is so qualified, St. Thomas, in the book which he writ to the king of Cyprus, *De Regimine Principum*, wishes that a kingdom could be so instituted as that the king might not be at liberty to tyrannize over his people; which only comes to pass in the present case; that is, when the sovereign power is restrained by political laws. Rejoice, therefore, my good prince, that such is the law of the kingdom to which you are to inherit, because it will afford both to yourself and subjects the greatest security and satisfaction'—*De Laudibus Legum Angliæ*, c. 9. Many other passages of this complexion might be adduced. In one instance Sir John describes the English constitution as originating in compact, and proceeds to set forth its principles according to that view.—Ibid. c. 12. Hallam, iii. 228, 229.

I give an extract from the English treatise, as showing what the English language was in the hands of the author, as well as on account

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Our historical literature during the fifteenth century is singularly poor. Walsingham, Otterburne, Whethamstede, Elmham, Titus Livius, William of Worcester, Rouse, and Fabian belong to this period: but their narratives are of no value except as they relate to contemporary matters, and even there the assistance to be derived from them is often unsatisfactory. Walsingham and Fabian are the most useful. Fabian wrote in English, the rest in indifferent Latin.

State of science.

Nor was the science of this century in a better condition than its literature. When Henry V. invaded France, Thomas Morstede was the only fully qualified surgeon in his train. Morstede engaged fifteen assistants. But while his own pay was not more than that of a man-at-arms, his assistants were classed in that respect with ordinary archers, and some of them were required to use the bow. On the second invasion, it was found necessary to press the assistants into the service. It must be evident, that in those armies, the deaths which resulted from the weapons of the enemy, would be few compared with those which must have taken place from the want of due surgical aid. The death of the king himself would seem to have been among the effects of this scientific ignorance.

Under Henry IV. a law was passed which forbade the attempts made to transmute inferior substances

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of what it contains. 'In *Flanders* and other Lordscippis of the Duke of *Burgoyne* downward, he [the King of France] taketh certeyn Imposicions made by hymself upon every Oxe, every Schepe, and upon other thyngs sould, and also upon every Vessel of Wyne, every Barell of Beer, and other Vytayls sould in his Lordschip, which is no litill Revenue to hym yerely: *but yet he doth it magre the People, which God defend that the Kyng our Soveryng Lord schuld do apn his People, without their Graunts and Assents.* Nevertheless with their Assents, such maner of Subsydye, if ther could not be found a better Meane of the encreasing of the Kyngs Revenuz, were not unreasonable. For theryn, and yn the Gable of Salt, every Man schal bere the charge therin equally. But yet I would not, that such a new Custome and Charge were put upon the People, in our Soveryng Lords dayes, with which his Progenitors chargyd them never, if a better and more convenient way could be found.'

into gold, under heavy penalties. By some, this law was framed to prevent a waste of the precious metals, and of precious stones, in experiments which it was believed must be fruitless. By others, the penalty was directed against the alleged magic of such practices. And this difference of judgment continued to prevail concerning such attempts. In the imagination of the people, the sole use of mathematics was to help the astrologer; and they knew not how to separate the experiments of the chemist from the extravagance of the alchemist. Such scholars were wizards, and their wives and daughters were supposed to be wise in their secrets. Many who were above the commonalty shared in this credulity, and were willing to believe that such studies led to great mysteries, which might be made to subserve the intrigues to which their ambition prompted them. That such persons should be found in the court of Henry VI. and of his successors, will excite no wonder, if we call to mind the faith in such delusions which prevailed in the court of France more than a century later, and the facts of this nature which are mixed up with the court history of our own James I. and with certain trials for witchcraft even later still. Minds which were superior to all faith of this description; as the result of general culture, were exceptions to the mass. Religion gave this superiority to some, religious scepticism suggested the same conclusion to others. Henry VI. had learned to believe it possible, that the elixir of life, and the philosopher's stone might be discovered; but he maintained that the discovery would come, not from the intervention of malignant powers, but from a benignant Providence, as a reward on human ingenuity and labour. In this belief the pious king issued a proclamation giving warrant to John Fauceby, John Kirkeby, and John Rayny, 'to investigate, begin, prosecute, 'and perfect the foresaid medicine, according to their 'own discretion, and the precepts of ancient sages, 'and also to transmute other metals into true gold

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'and silver.'* Parliament rescinded the statute of Henry IV. and gave the authority of law to this proclamation.

The introduction of printing—Caxton.

The art of printing, as may be supposed, did not escape the suspicions which fell, in those times of ignorance, on the science of mathematics and chemistry. But it was in Germany and the Low Countries, more than in England, that the black art was associated with the first use of the printer's type. The earliest experiments in printing on the Continent may be traced to about the year 1430; the earliest specimen in this country did not appear until 1474, or possibly 1477. That John Caxton of the Mercers' Company in London was our first printer, is beyond reasonable doubt. Caxton was not only a man of business but a man of travel, one of those ingenious and honest traders who earn their right to stand before kings. He was deputed by Edward IV. to negotiate a commercial treaty with the Duke of Burgundy, and was otherwise well known to persons of influence. The above-mentioned negotiation belongs to the year 1464. Caxton began to print some ten years later, and laboured with great assiduity in his new employment through the remaining twelve years of his life. The sort of books printed by Caxton merit consideration, as they indicate the taste and feeling of the time. The nature of the supply was no doubt determined by what was known to be the nature of the demand. Judging from these works, the spirit of the age embraced that mixture of the religious and the romantic which had been characteristic of the intellectual life of England for some centuries past. The same Caxton types were used to work off the *Golden Legend*, and *King Arthur*; a volume of *Directions for Keeping Feasts all the Year*, and a *Book of the Order of Chivalry*; the *Life of St. Catherine of Sens*, or of *St. Wynefrid*, and the *History of the Noble, Right Valiant, and Right*

* Rymer, ii. 379.

Worthy Knight of Paris and his Fair Vienne—coupled with the renowned tale of *Renard the Fox*, or the *Subtle Histories of the Fables of Esop*. Such were the works sent forth, in about equal proportions, by the infant press of England. But no writer profited more in reputation by the new invention than our own Chaucer. One Thomas Hunt, and several foreigners, became known as printers in England before the death of Caxton.*

Probabilities of the future.

Our literature, we have seen, was in a sorry state when the printing-press made its appearance among us; and the science of the age was in the same low condition. But the English constitution—and the English constitution as expounded by Fortescue—had been saved; and the battle on the side of freedom of opinion had not come to a close. The aspects of this struggle had been painfully fluctuating; but no thoughtful man can fail to see that the papal policy had long been losing ground in England, and that the history of England in this particular had become the history of Christendom. And now, with the magic agency of the press at its disposal, this new spirit might well be expected to achieve new victories. To judge wisely concerning the change which had come over the relations and position of the papacy, and concerning the prospect, in consequence, of the mind of society in the fifteenth century, it is important to look to the present in its relation to the past.

Historical function of the papal power.

Amidst the chaos which ensued on the fall of the Roman empire, the unity which characterized the papal system gave a wholesome tendency to its influence. Providence seems to have permitted it to grow strong, that it might do the work which then needed to be done. It was by this influence that the Latin element left within the limits of the empire was preserved, and that the new elements were made to combine with it. The ecclesiastical power of Rome

* Rymer, ii. 591. 'Caxton,' *Biographia Brit.* *Caxton, a Biography.*

came thus into the place of its old secular power, and nations ceded to it a universality which no other power could claim. We have seen the deference shown to this authority by our rude ancestors before the Conquest; and the same spirit is observable in France, Germany, and elsewhere.

But this interval, during which the adverse elements were being brought more and more into combination, was not of long duration. The northern invaders, and the people they conquered, became one, and the new kingdoms they formed were soon separated from each other by differences of language, and by much beside, which sufficed to give them their place as distinct nationalities. As these new states became consolidated, new feelings of nationality grew up, and the feeling thus called into existence at the extremities becoming stronger and stronger, it was inevitable that the supremacy exercised from the centre should become weaker and weaker. The ecclesiastical history of the Middle Age consists in the history of this growing independence on the part of the different nations on the one hand, and of this declining influence on the part of the pontiffs and their court on the other. The war is everywhere a war between nationality and centralization. The papal power continued strong, and retained its universality, so long as that strength and that universality were needed; it became weak, and was resisted, in the proportion in which nations became capable of dispensing with its services, by becoming more capable of self-defence and of self-government. The resistances to the papacy in England, through every reign after the Conquest, have their parallel in the history of all the contemporary states of Christendom. So far back must we go, if we would detect the beginnings of the struggle between Protestantism and Romanism, or, in other words, between freedom and authority.

Decline of the papal supremacy.

The disputes so long carried on in regard to investitures, had now ended in favour of the temporal

power. Princes are left to nominate, without disturbance, to the higher benefices of the church. Such is the tendency of affairs on all questions between the nationalities and the pontiffs. The papal schism has done its work. The councils of Pisa, and Constance, and Basle have laid bare the corruption of the existing system. By deposing or creating popes at pleasure, those reverend fathers have so lowered the papal authority as to render its future comparatively harmless. Pilgrimages, and other forms of popular superstition, continue to be almost as prevalent as ever. But the spirit of the past is no longer in those customs. Europe is menaced, almost to its centre, by the Turks. The popes make the utmost effort to evoke another crusading enterprise against this formidable enemy. But nothing can be more signal than their failure. The danger is imminent, the pleas for action are most sacred; but to call forth any combined or special movement is found to be impossible. The time, indeed, seems to have arrived, in which change of some kind must come, if religious conviction is not to die out.*

* Of the pass to which affairs had come between the national feeling of the time and the papacy, we have sufficient evidence in the history of the famous *præmunire* statute. This statute belongs to the reign of Richard II. It was designed to concentrate the essence of all previous statutes against the encroachments of the papacy, and to secure their object by provisions of greater severity. Its words are—'Whereupon our said lord the king, by the assent aforesaid, and at the request of his said commons, hath ordained, and established, that if any purchase, or pursue, or cause to be purchased or pursued, in the court of Rome or elsewhere, any such translations, processes, and sentences of excommunications, bulls, instruments, or any other things whatsoever, *which touch the king, against him, his crown, and his regality, or his realm*; as is aforesaid, and they which bring within the realm, or they who receive or make thereof notification, or any other execution whatsoever, within the same realm, or without, that *they*, their *notaries, procurators, maintainers, abettors, fautors, and councillors*, shall be *put out of the king's protection*, and their lands and tenements, goods and chattels, *forfeited to our lord the king:* and that they be attached by their bodies, if they may be found, and brought before the king and his council, there to answer to the cases aforesaid, or that process be made against them by *præmunire*

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Secularized policy of the pontiffs.

But there is no prospect that any change for the better will be found to originate with the papacy. During the half-century preceding the age of Luther, it is manifest to all men that the spiritual power of the popes has almost ceased to exist. None are more sensible of this fact than the popes themselves. Sixtus IV., Alexander VI., and Julius II. are all popes of this interval. Their power as the spiritual fathers of Christendom being so small, it becomes their policy to improve their position as Italian princes, by every possible expedient. How to manage affairs so as to ensure status and wealth to their respective families, in the manner of the successful ruling families of Italy, is the question which occupies the whole life of the first and second of the pontiffs above named. All Italy knows this to be the guiding thought of those spiritual chiefs, and, what is worse, has come to look upon it as a natural course of things, and deals with it accordingly. The aim of Sixtus IV. is to make his

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facias, in manner as it is ordained in other statutes of provisors.' So effectual was this statute, in the altered spirit of the times, that the authority of the pontiffs was felt to be at an end in England, except as approved by the crown. In the time of Henry VI. pope Martin complained in the most bitter terms of this statute. Here is his language: 'By this execrable statute the king of England has so entirely usurped the spiritual jurisdiction, as if our Saviour had constituted him his Vicar. He makes laws for the church, and the order for the clergy; draws the cognizance of ecclesiastical causes to temporal courts; makes provision about clerks, benefices, and the concerns of the hierarchy, as if he held the keys of the kingdom of heaven, as if the administration of those affairs were with the king, and not with St. Peter. Besides these hideous encroachments, he has enacted terrible penalties against the clergy. Jews and Saracens are not treated with so much severity. People of all persuasions, of all countries, have the liberty of coming to England—except those who have cures bestowed upon them by the supreme bishop, by the vicar of Jesus Christ. Those only are banished, arrested, imprisoned, stripped of their fortunes. Proctors, or notaries, charged with the mandates or censures of the apostolic see, if they venture to set foot on English ground, and proceed to the fulfilment of their commission, are treated as the king's enemies—cast out of the king's protection. Is this a Catholic kingdom?'—Collier, i. 596, 597. Raynaldus, ad an. 1426. Milman vi. 76. So did affairs ripen in the fifteenth century towards their issue in the sixteenth.

nephew Riario the chief of a great house; and he succeeds in raising him to the lordship of Imola and Forlì. But to achieve this object, his holiness commits himself to so much perfidious intrigue and bloodshed, in Florence, in Venice, and in other places, as to become associated with execrable memories in the thoughts of all men. His successor pursues the same policy with still greater eagerness, with less scruple, and with more success. Alexander VI. has sons, openly acknowledged. How best to surround himself, even in old age, with every imaginable means of indulgence, and how best to confer position and wealth on his children, are the ends towards which all his thoughts are directed. One of his sons is the infamous Cæsar Borgia—a man who realizes our conception of a Satanic incarnation more fully perhaps than any man in history. His person exhibits an extraordinary combination of the powerful and the beautiful—the strength of Hercules with the grace of Apollo. The horrible in his crimes is only equalled by the subtlety with which he proceeds to the perpetration of them. He is voluptuous, can be liberal, even magnanimous; but it is his passion to clear his way to his object through every sort of impediment, and to bring, if we may so express it, an artistic genius to such performances, which is known to have been especially interesting to him, and which distanced all vulgar delinquents hopelessly. It is true, Cæsar Borgia is not a pope. But he is the son of a pope; and the city, and the very chambers, of the man holding that most sacred office, are the chosen scenes of his enormities.

Julius II. differs from his predecessor, inasmuch as his object is not to aggrandize a family, but to enlarge and consolidate the temporal power of his see, and to accomplish this end, he does not depend mainly on intrigue or secret crime, but appeals openly to arms. His advanced age, with strength impaired by debauchery and intemperance, does not prevent his so ruling, and so waging war, as to augment the

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dominions of the church beyond all precedent. Great kings learn to respect his power. But the very fact that a pope of such genius and energy can see no way to greatness except by descending into the worldly arena, and doing battle there as a secular prince, suggests how feeble, and comparatively profitless, the spiritual branch of the Roman pontificate must have become. It is true, individuals of eminent piety, and members of princely and papal families, such as the Borromeos of Lombardy, and the Colonnas of Rome, were to be found even in Italy. But they were rare exceptions to their order, and lights which only served to make the surrounding darkness more visible and ominous. There were men of this description in the councils of Constance and Basle, who raised their voice honestly and devoutly on the side of reform; but the strength of the resistance called forth, presented only a new manifestation, both of the breadth and the depth of the feeling opposed to all change in favour of a purer state of kings.

Corruption at the head common to the members.

What the heads of the ecclesiastical system are during this half century, the system itself in the main has become. The maxims and conduct of the highest have descended to the lowest. It was inseparable from so much ecclesiastical wealth, that churchmen should often be sordid and worldly. But the church in those days had become, in a degree hitherto unknown, a mart in which money commands everything, and in which the science of intrigue is the next power to wealth. The men who secure the coveted preferments by such means, contrive to assign the duties of them to subordinates, prepared to render service on the lowest terms. In this manner, they have become possessed of the largest possible revenue, on the easiest possible conditions. This revenue, it should be remembered, comes not simply, or even mainly, from the land. Every priestly service is a commodity for which a price is to be paid. Marriages, christenings, burials, absolutions, indulgences, and the like, are all matters of fiscal arrangement.

By the customs and tariffs so established, and which are virtually farmed by the inferior clergy from their superiors, the rapacity of the order is made to enter the homes of the poorest, and to be felt there with a constancy which scarcely seems to know intermission. Some there are who see these evils, and bitterly deplore them. We find such men among our own national clergy, and they may be found more or less everywhere. But the tide is too strong to be stayed by such resistance. War has been waged for centuries to preclude the popes from assigning the bishoprics and the richer livings of the national churches to their *protégés*, and it has been waged with success. But the princes, the great families, and the lay patrons generally, are fully as unfaithful to their trust as the court of Rome had been. They do not bestow their patronage so frequently on foreigners, but they bestow it quite as frequently upon the incompetent and the worthless. Such gifts are generally regarded as matters to be disposed of through family influence, favouritism, or for a consideration.*

Revival of literature and art.

Side by side with this decay of everything ecclesiastical and religious, comes the revival of classical literature and of ancient art. This tendency in the intelligence and taste of the states of Europe may be traced far back into the Middle Age. But in the fifteenth century, the advance of the Turks towards Constantinople, and the ultimate fall of that capital, made both the genius, and the vast literary treasures, of the East, the possession of the West. The cities of Italy became the special home of the Greek fugitives, and the depositories of those remains of ancient learning which they were careful to carry with them. Nicolas V. became pontiff in 1449. He lived in the midst of these memorable events. As plain Thomas of Sarzana, he had long been a passionate collector of books

* Ranke's *History of the Popes*, Introd. Roscoe's *Pontificate of Leo X. Life of Lorenzo de' Medici.*

and manuscripts, and of such remains of classic art as his means could procure, or which he could induce the more wealthy to purchase. Nicolas was persuaded that it became the spiritual head of Christendom to secure to the papacy all the advantage that might be derived from a patronage of this movement; and if the policy of such a course had been less obvious, his inclination would have prompted him strongly towards it. When Cosmo de' Medici decided on forming the library of St. Marco in Florence, Thomas of Sarzana was the person to whom he looked as most competent to classify the books, and to prepare the catalogue. That library became the model of many formed by other hands in different parts of Italy, and especially of the library of the Vatican, which owed its origin to his own zeal and munificence as Nicolas V. The five thousand volumes included in the Vatican collection in his time were spoken of as the wonder of the age. Nothing like it had been seen in the West since the fall of the Roman empire.

Scholars from all parts were now attracted to Rome, and all found there both genial and highly lucrative employment. The Latin and Greek classics, the Greek Fathers, and the sacred Scriptures both in Greek and Hebrew, were transcribed, collated, and annotated, on a scale which reads more like fable than like history. Architecture, and all the arts tributary to it, received the same surprising impulse. Fortifications, churches, palaces, streets, all bore witness to the change which was to mark this epoch in the history of the Eternal City; and now it was decreed that the modern St. Peter's should come into the place of the edifice which had so long stood on that site. Nicolas was the sovereign of the Papal States, and in his hands the exercise of that power was wise and benignant. But he never forgot that his highest rank was that of sovereign pontiff; and by all this encouragement given to learning and art, he hoped to throw around the papal power a new dignity and pres-

tige, such as should compensate in some measure for the influence it had lost. His successors, indeed, did not emulate his worth. In them, there was more of the secular prince than of the chief pastor. Religion had little place in their thoughts. But the revival of letters had come from too many causes, and drew towards itself too wide a sympathy, to be dependent on the accidents of character in the ruling pontiffs. The feeling which had thus grown up in Rome, had grown up in all the States of Italy. Everywhere scholars gave their days and nights to the new studies. Every home of the wealthy became a place of meeting for such men, where they compared acquisitions, exchanged criticisms, and struck out plans for the future.

LEO X.

Leo X. was a man of his time. The most prominent elements in Italian life were embodied in his character. He was a decorous pontiff, if compared with his immediate predecessors. But he, too, was much more prince than bishop. His canonical habits did not sit naturally upon him. He dispensed with them whenever it was practicable. In the autumn, he always made his escape from Rome, and fished, and hunted, and hawked with the gayest. Accomplished men, who could give vivacity to his table, and to everything about him, were always near his person. In Rome, during the winter, the most solemn festivals of the church were interspersed with the most imposing theatrical performances. In short, the court of Leo X. became very much what the court of Versailles was to become two centuries later. Nations may be awed for a while by such splendour; and men full of their worldly wisdom learnt to persuade themselves that the empire of the church might be served by such means. They do not seem to have suspected that a state of things so opposed to all that we know of primitive Christianity might provoke dangerous comparisons; or that the intellectual movement which had called forth multitudes of men prepared

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to work for hire, might send forth men constrained to labour in the higher departments of intelligence from the highest motives.

Scepticism in Italy in the fifteenth century.

Such results were the more probable, from the fact that the spirit which pervaded this revived literature and art proved to be essentially a pagan spirit. When we come to the opening of the sixteenth century, the great mission of the sculptor and of the artist seems to be, to thrust the gods and goddesses of the old heathenism into the place which had been filled by the saint and the martyr. In the struggle which ensues, the pagan spirit is found to be greatly stronger than the Christian spirit, especially in the case of the more educated. Multitudes, not a few of whom are ecclesiastics, do not scruple to avow that they are content to derive their notions of religion from the source which has given them their models of taste. 'Through the half century which precedes the elevation of Leo X., the professionalism of the church of Rome is, in the case of many, only a thin covering laid over the most materialized scepticism. Priests can mingle blasphemous jests with their religious services. Men pledged to uphold the Christian religion, can discourse in colleges, and reason in private, to show that the soul is not immortal, that there is nothing in it to ensure to it a higher destiny than belongs to the instinct of the brute. In fact, the man is accounted as one loitering behind the age, who does not indulge in some such talk. 'On his death-bed 'Cosmo de' Medici is attended by Ficinus, who as- 'sures him of another life on the authority of Socrates, 'and teaches him resignation in the words of Plato, 'Xenocrates, and other Athenian sages.'*

Prospects of society on the opening of the fifteenth century.

Such is the decay of faith which comes along with a general corruption of manners, in the quarter where faith in the divine origin of Christianity should be

* Milman, vi. 438. Roscoe's *Pontificate of Leo X. Life of Lorenzo de' Medici.*

the strongest, and the sanctity proper to the Christian profession the most above suspicion. And we have now to remember, that the intelligence of the age is showing itself to be an irrepressible and constantly-expanding intelligence; that the revival of literary criticism, and of art criticism, is of necessity inseparable from a revival of criticism on questions of morals and religion; that in Bohemia, in Germany, and in England—the great homes of the Teutonic race—there is no sign of religious scepticism, but much evidence of deep religious earnestness; that in the countries of these peoples, the vernacular language has become so formed, as to ensure that there will soon be, not only a powerful literature, but a Bible in those languages; that for centuries, the national feeling, in all these communities, has been growing stronger, while reverence for the papacy—a power *ab extra* to the nation—has been ceasing more and more to be what it once was. At this same juncture, too, which witnesses the successful use of the printing-press, comes the matured manufacture of paper. All these facts combine to say, that the curb which has been laid on the papal power in the past, weighty as it may have been, is light compared with that which awaits it; and that a system which has long been felt as the great hindrance, not only to religion and virtue, but to national independence, and to social progress generally, is about to disappear, or to be shut up to limits that will be new in its history. A believing Christendom, subject to an infidel popedom, is a posture of affairs that can hardly be of long continuance.

When we look, indeed, to the vast numbers of the clergy, including all the religious orders; to the immense wealth—nearly half the wealth of Europe—that has passed into their hands; to the prejudice and interest which must dispose such men to resist innovation; to the many influences for good, as well as for evil, which have had a place in their history; and to the natural slowness of mankind in seeing their way

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to the wisdom of any great change in regard to religion—it must be confessed that the revolution in the affairs of Europe which seems to be inevitable, is one the course and issues of which no man of that age could have ventured to predict.* Spain is not yet free from her domestic foe, the Moslem, but her share in the coming struggle will not be small. Austria may be expected to take her place by the side of Italy. France may act more independently. But it is evidently with the Teutons of Germany, England, the Netherlands, and the North, that the representatives of the old Latin empire will have to settle the great controversy which must soon arise.

Richard III.

By the close of the reign of Henry VII., Providence had done much to prepare England for the part she was to take in the new world about to open upon us. Two short years sufficed for the reign of Richard III. Sovereignty so acquired could not be of long duration. Whether from vanity or from penitence, Richard seemed disposed to exercise his authority, in the main, considerately and wisely. But men never saw him, rarely heard his name, without some remembrance of the judicial murders which had removed Rivers, Grey, and others, from his path; nor, above all, without that Tower scene, which disposed of his nephews, being shadowed in some form in the distance. The country had been greatly demoralized by war—by civil war; but the crimes of Richard III. were among the foulest deeds of those bad times, and it was felt to be natural and fitting that such a man should reap

* The anticipation of our own Wycliffe on this subject should be cited. Looking to the future, while writing his *Trialogus*, he says, 'I imagine that some fraternity, whom God shall vouchsafe to teach, will be devoutly converted to the primitive religion of Christ; and, abandoning their false interpretations of genuine Christianity, after having claimed, or extorted liberty for themselves from Antichrist, will freely return to the religion of Christ as it was at first, and then, they will build up the church like Paul.'—Neander's *Reformation Movements in England.* Had Luther or Melancthon seen this prophecy, they might have had a good word for this great Englishman.

as he had sown. What the course of Richard would have been towards the church is uncertain. He said some flattering things to the clergy, and the clergy descended to flatter him in return;* but we may be sure that his ultimate policy would have been determined, had his reign been prolonged, by his vanity or his convenience, much more than by any graver consideration. The probability is, that he would have deemed the good offices of churchmen of too much importance to his interests to be dispensed with. Complaints against ecclesiastics might be heard everywhere: but the views of the men who uttered them had not become sufficiently enlightened or defined, to justify a king in courting their friendship at the cost of incurring the enmity of men, who, in a sense, had all the parishes of England in their keeping.†

Accession of the house of Tudor.

On the death of Henry V., his widow, a native of France, became the wife of Owen Tudor, a gentleman of her household, and a native of Wales. Tudor had three sons by this marriage, one of whom died early, but became father of Henry, earl of Richmond, afterwards Henry VII. Richmond had been introduced to Henry VI. when a boy, and the good king is said to have predicted his probable accession to the English throne. When the battle of Tewkesbury destroyed the last hope of the Lancastrians, Richmond was fifteen years of age. It was deemed wise to remove him from the kingdom; and from that time until his landing to oppose himself to Richard III. he had been resident in Bretagne. The paternal relationship of Richmond, and his being so little known in this country, were not circumstances in his favour. But the men opposed to Richard were bent upon displacing him, and there was no other quarter to which they

* Wilkins, *Concilia*, v. 614.

† Sir Thomas More's *Life and Reign of Richard III.* *Life and Reign of Richard III.*, by George Buck, Esq. Hall's *Chronicle*, 342–421. Hollinshed.

could look with the same prospect of success. They were men, moreover, who had learnt to account it an advantage that the king should not be allowed to feel himself so strong as to be tempted to assume independence of his nobles. This notion, we have seen, had been the source of incalculable mischief in English history during the last hundred years. But it had now pretty nearly done its work. Henry VII. suffered from it. He lived, however, to frustrate one conspiracy after another; and by putting down, with a strong hand, that liveried and armed following of the nobility, which had served to make them all so many petty kings, he left the English throne in a much more stable condition than he found it.

Rule of Henry VII.

Henry's marriage with Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Edward IV., no doubt contributed largely to this result. The conflicting claims of York and Lancaster were thus harmonized in his person. But even this event might not have sufficed to ensure tranquillity, apart from the general caution and ability of his rule. He is justly described as a great lover of money. It is manifest that he was more disposed to levy fines upon delinquents than to send them to the scaffold. But this was in pursuance of his general policy. Though not wanting in courage himself, he did his utmost to discountenance violence and bloodshed. He incurred large expense that his subjects might be gratified in witnessing the show and pomp of war. This was all done, however, in the hope of weaning them from the reality, and eventually from the military passion altogether. On his accession, England had long been in danger of becoming another Poland. It seemed as though Englishmen could settle nothing without arms in their hands. All the higher interests of civilization were thus in peril. The reign of Henry VII., accordingly, forms an epoch in our history. From that time the old feudal baron is no more. The modern nobleman is about to come into his place. Rank is to possess its prestige; wealth is to retain its

influence; but intelligence is henceforth to be the great power in national affairs.*

His ecclesiastical policy.

In regard to religion, the policy of Henry VII. was such, on the whole, as might have been expected from a sovereign whose habits were all so strictly conservative. He sustained the checks which had been opposed to the pretensions of the papacy by the statutes of his predecessors. But he was careful to guard against disagreement in that quarter. Nor did he show any disposition to encourage the party who would willingly have made some inroad on the enormous wealth of the national church. In ecclesiastical affairs, his great merit was, that he did much to enforce greater purity and consistency of living among the clergy; and his great fault was, that he allowed that class of men, scandalous as their lives often were, to renew the persecutions of former years, and was himself at times a party to such proceedings. During the civil wars, so great were the disorders of the times, that considerable latitude seems to have been allowed to the expression of opinion. But such licence was now at an end. In the reign of Henry VII., many persons were burnt as having embraced the doctrines of Wycliffe; and great numbers in London, Amersham, Coventry, and other places, were made to do public penance as the punishment of errors of that nature attributed to them. Twenty thousand people were sometimes present at scenes of this description; and the night after the martyrdom of a woman much stricken in years, named Joan Boughton, 'the most part of her 'ashes' is said to have been borne away from Smithfield, by those who 'had a love unto the doctrine she 'died for.'† The Lollards might well be without any great affection for the memory of Henry VII. But they showed no sign of disloyalty in his time. They left that to the clergy and the religious orders, some

* Bacon's *Henry VII.* Hall, 422 et seq.

† Foxe, bk. vi. Wilkins, *Concilia*, iii. 616 et seqq. Fabian, 529–535.

of whom were concerned in every imposture and conspiracy directed against him. Henry punished treason in the priest with imprisonment; for heresy in the laity, whether in man or woman, he allowed a heavier penalty to be inflicted. But to Henry VII., with all his defects and faults, both as a man and a king, England owed no small debt of gratitude. His firm and sagacious policy sufficed to smooth the way for the great transition from the mediæval to the modern in English history. And with this great change in favour of law, order, and comparative refinement, came the seeds of change in much beside.*

* Some thirty years ago, the *Paston Letters* were almost our only documents throwing any considerable and direct light on the domestic life of our ancestors in the fifteenth century. Since then, the different associations for publishing ancient writings, the Camden Society, Cheetham Society, Roxborough Club, &c., have added somewhat to our means of knowledge on this subject. It is evident from such sources, that the middle and the gentry class of that age were in general firm believers in the authority assumed by the priest over the souls of the living and the dead, though, from many causes, their relation to the priest was by no means an abject relation. Children were trained to great reverence for their parents, generally addressing their father as 'worshipful;' and wives were wont to be very reverential towards their husbands. Parents did not leave the moral and religious education of their children wholly to others. It were better, they sometimes said, to see them buried than to see them dishonoured. Self-reliant and honest industry, was of great price. That habit, indeed, seemed to be natural to the mass of the people in town and country. In marriages, affection no doubt had its place, but in general a keen eye is directed towards property. The love of home comfort is evidently great, and men and women seem prepared, by activity and forethought, to do their best to ensure the means of such comfort. The election of a member of parliament has come to be often an exciting scene; but the animosities of the civil wars affect the upper classes much more deeply and permanently than the middle or the lower. Lawsuits are abundant, though it is believed that judges are not always pure, and places are often known to be bought. Organization is appreciated. Energy to act without it is not wanting. So some of the germs of the present may be seen in the past. In England, even in the worst times, the industrial power of the people seems destined to be strong.

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